

Placement Policy

Updated October 2021

STRUCTURE OF PLACEMENTS

1. Placements may take place as part or all of a module, or may constitute a full or part year of an academic programme.
2. When a placement is undertaken as part of a paper or module, the learning outcomes for that placement are determined by the module or paper.

Placements that students are required to undertake but which are not part of a formally accredited programme have the following learning outcomes:

At the end of the placement, students should

- Be able to root theological training and formation in the life, ministry and mission of the given context.
- Be able to bring assumptions, both theological and practical, into fruitful contact with practice in order to provoke further questions, stimulate reflective practice and theological reflection, thus deepening formational learning.
- Demonstrate some hands-on experience in a range of ministerial practices.
- Be able to demonstrate learning at several levels including personal and spiritual development; personal and professional relationships; ministerial skills; growth in knowledge and understanding of the ministry and mission of the church.

APPROVAL OF PLACEMENTS

Where a placement forms a compulsory part of a programme of study or a standard option and are therefore included in the programme specification and regulations, students registered for the programme negotiate with their Director of Studies¹ the programme of work which will meet the learning outcomes of the placement. This document usually takes the form of a Working Agreement.

Where a placement has not been approved as a compulsory part of, or a standard option within, a programme of study but the Director of Studies wishes to permit a particular student to undertake a placement, a Working Agreement will be put in place.

The Working Agreement must be agreed by the placement supervisor, the House, the Director of Studies and the student and copies kept by the House and the student.

¹ In this document "Director of Studies" may refer to a Director of Pastoral Studies or other staff member.

INFORMATION FOR PLACEMENT PROVIDERS

Once a placement has been approved, each Director of Studies is responsible for ensuring that placement providers are informed of:

- a) the intended learning outcomes of the placement;
- b) the role of the placement in the programme of study; and
- c) the criteria by which the Director of Studies will assess the placement: this is especially relevant when a module or paper requires the student to carry out a specific project in the placement.

APPROVAL OF PLACEMENT PROVIDERS

The Federation accepts that the following categories of placement providers should normally be able to provide placements of an appropriate standard:

- a. for ecclesial placements: churches, college chapels, fresh expressions of church
- b. for social context placements: schools, universities, hospitals, hospices, civil society organisations, armed forces, faith based organisations.

Notwithstanding the above, the Director of Studies concerned must still ensure that the learning outcomes of the placement can be met and must monitor placements to ensure that the expected standards are reached. They must also take steps to address problems.

Smaller organisations, for example those which are restricted to the country of the placement and/or are otherwise unknown (including arrangements made by students for themselves and 'personal' arrangements), are more problematic and care will be taken to ensure that appropriate information about the placement provider is received. This should be provided by the student where they are arranging the placement and it should be made clear to students that the Federation and/or the Director of Studies reserves the right to withhold approval from such arrangements. Approval may also be withheld from placements which are offered by entirely reputable organisations but where the placement is inappropriate to the learning outcomes and the programme of study.

The procedure for approval of church-based placement providers will be the responsibility of each Director of Studies.

STUDENT SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

Placement handbook

Students undertaking a placement will be provided with a placement handbook (or equivalent document). The handbook will cover the following areas:

- a. Clear information about the role of the placement in the programme of study, its learning outcomes, the implications of the placement for progression and/or degree classification, the assessment criteria and the mode(s) of assessment to be used.
- b. Clear information about their obligations within the placement.
- c. Information on a contact in the host organisation, where appropriate, to whom students can take problems in the first instance;
- d. Information on the routine contact the House will have with students during the placement to provide a 'progress check'.
- e. Information on the support available to the student from the House while on placement, including a point of contact in case of emergency and information on dealing with problems or complaints.
- f. Work expectations.
- g. Safeguarding information.
- h. Information on insurance.

Pre-placement briefing

In addition to the placement handbook, students will be given the following information prior to departure:

- a. clear information about their own personal programme of work during the placement;
- b. basic information about the host organisation and its location. Notes from previous students can be invaluable;
- c. information about travel arrangements to and from the placement including any responsibility on the part of the student for making such arrangements;
- d. information about accommodation arrangements. It is not essential for the House to arrange accommodation for placement students but all students (in the UK and abroad) must be told what to expect and what they will have to arrange for themselves. For students travelling abroad their House will provide general advice including 'common sense' guidelines about location, travel to and from the placement and the types of accommodation typically available. Notes from past students are very helpful and consideration is given to building up dossiers of 'tips' to which the students can have access while they are abroad as well as before they leave.

- e. general 'cultural' information (do's and don'ts). This may relate to the conventions of a foreign country or to professional expectations within the local church. In some cases such expectations may be made clear by the host organisation but the Director of Studies will ensure that students obtain essential information;

This information will be provided via pre-placement briefing sessions, or through the provision of documentation, depending on the circumstances.

SUPPORT DURING PLACEMENTS

Director of Studies will consider the feasibility of pastoral visits from a member of staff.

Where pastoral visits cannot be undertaken it is especially important to develop channels of communication for students during their placements; to ensure that procedures for de-briefing students are robust; and to take steps to avoid sending future students to locations which have presented problems.

POST-PLACEMENT

On return the Director of Studies will seek feedback from students on their placement, and use this to support the review and enhancement of placement provision.

For students who have undertaken an extended period away, the Director of Studies will make arrangements to re-orientate students into their studies and communities of learning by:

Offering a 'debriefing' meeting at which students can share their experiences, advise on good practice and alert the Director of Studies to problems and further opportunities;

offering an opportunity to discuss, collectively and/or individually, the implications of their experiences for their next year of study which may include module choice, choice of dissertation etc.

Returning students will also be asked to talk with the following year's placement students to share experiences and give advice directly. They may also be asked to prepare notes for fellow-students which can be built up into a comprehensive resource.

ASSESSMENT

Placement learning may be assessed:

- a. at threshold level (pass/fail) if the placement is additional to a full programme of study and does not contribute a percentage of the marks to the classification of the degree;
- b. by means of the appropriate criteria and marking scheme for the relevant programme (BTh, DTM or Common Awards).

The placement handbook will make clear to students how assessment is to be carried out.

Monitoring and review of placement learning

The responsibility for the quality of placement learning rests with the Cambridge Theological Federation. Houses must therefore consider their placement learning within their annual review (for example the placement co-ordinator could submit a report to the annual review detailing strengths, weaknesses, developments and action points associated with the placement scheme as a whole and/or individual providers as appropriate). Placement learning provision will also be considered during periodic review.

Where a placement is provided by another Higher Education Institution the Director of Studies is responsible for defining the learning experience of the students and for assuring its quality. This is particularly important where the placement replaces a period of study which would otherwise have been undertaken at Durham and/or Cambridge.

In terms of the ongoing management of placements, each House will:

- a. appoint one or more designated placement co-ordinators to take responsibility for managing the placement;
- b. document the information regarding the aspects of the placement covered by these guidelines and make this easily available to students, staff and placement hosts;
- c. ask students to complete full questionnaires on their experiences. Houses may draft their own questionnaire.
- d. establish mechanisms with host organisations, where appropriate, by which good practice can be reinforced and problems addressed - either as they arise or within a routine (possibly annual) review, which may be face-to-face or by correspondence / email / video-conferencing etc. Such problems may be academic, pastoral or administrative;