Guidelines for Individual Study Placements

Note: This is for internal purposes only

Student Placements (Academic and Work)

Heriot-Watt University has a series of key documents related to student placements, both academic and work, which set out the institutional policy framework and operational procedures related to the planning, approval, delivery, management and assessment of academic and work placements. The core documents are as follows:

- Student Placements (Work and Academic): Policy
- Student Placements (Work and Academic): Briefing Paper
- Student Placements: Guidelines on Academic Placements (Exchange)
- Student Placements: Guidelines on Academic Placements (Individual Study Placements)
- Student Placements: Guidelines on Work Placements

All documents are available on the Academic Policy Bank at:

http://www.hw.ac.uk/committees/ltb/ltb-policies.htm#S

Student Placements: Guidelines on Academic Placements (Individual Study Placements)

These guidelines apply to:

- Individual Study Placements (ISPs) where a student is given permission to study at another institution overseas for an approved period as part of an academic programme (see Individual Study Placement guidelines at: http://www.hw.ac.uk/quality/exchange-academic-placements.htm).

These guidelines do not cover:

- A credit-rated, approved academic period of study undertaken as part of one of the University's exchange partnerships with higher education institutions worldwide. (See Exchange Guidelines at http://www.hw.ac.uk/quality/exchange.htm);
- University-approved exchange partnerships which are part of the Erasmus Exchange Programme within the Lifelong Learning Programme (as supported by the Commission of the European Communities) and non-European exchange programmes with other higher education institutions worldwide, as approved by the University (See Exchange Guidelines at http://www.hw.ac.uk/quality/exchange.htm);
- Any extra-curricular study, which students have arranged for themselves and has not been approved as an individual study placement;
- Period of study at a different campus of the University than the student's “home” campus (See the University's Policy on Transfer between Study Locations http://www.hw.ac.uk/committees/ltb/ltb-policies.htm#T);
1. Introduction

1.1 Heriot-Watt University (HWU) actively participates in Individual Study Placements (ISPs) where a student is given permission to study at another institution overseas for an approved period as part of an academic programme. ISPs differ from Exchange placements which are approved student mobility programmes, requiring inter-institutional agreements to be in place.

1.2 The University has a duty of care for students undertaking ISPs in premises outwith the University. All Schools are therefore expected to take reasonable steps to ensure that those education partners are safe and suitable environments. The University will not authorise a study placement if there are any concerns about the institution’s health, safety and welfare arrangements.

1.3 All ISPs, which are an integral part of a degree programme, will attract academic credit which will normally form part of the final award which a student might be eligible to receive from the University.

1.4 The provision of placements should promote equality of opportunities for students as encouraged by the University and required under anti-discrimination legislation, relating to equal opportunities, disability discrimination and sex discrimination.

1.5 The aim of this document is to provide a set of principles, based on existing good practice, which should be of benefit to staff involved in programmes with permission for a period of placement or involved in the modification of programmes to include placement learning. Schools may wish to produce their own placement learning document to supplement the University guidelines. This guidance incorporates the following suite of documents:

- Guidelines for Individual Study Placements
- Individual Study Placement Approval Summary Form,
- Individual Study Placement Risk Assessment Form,
- Guide to the assessment of risk associated with partnerships and study placements,
- Individual Study Placements – considerations for Schools and
- Individual Study Placements – considerations for Students.

2. Areas of Responsibility

2.1 Heriot-Watt University (HWU)

Schools/Institutes within HWU are responsible for the management and administration of ISPs. In addition to the responsibilities covered in Sections 3 and 4, Schools/Institutes should:

2.1.1 Ensure this policy is implemented in their academic areas and that relevant staff are aware of and comply with the policy. A system must be developed to ensure ISPs are approved and appropriate to the specification of the degree programme.
2.1.2 Provide and publicise information in relation to ISPs that is clear, unambiguous and consistent within channels such as the University website, prospectus and School handbooks. To accommodate the requirements of students with disabilities, all documents should be available in alternative formats.

2.1.3 Ensure students are made aware of the range of study placement opportunities and how these can contribute to their personal, career and future development. As well as the materials publicised, this can be facilitated by allowing students to meet and interact with placement providers visiting the University and post-placement students.

2.1.4 Ensuring students are made aware of the fee implications on undertaking an ISP.

2.1.5 Make students aware of their responsibilities in terms of sourcing and securing individual placements and also as representatives of the University while on placement.

2.1.6 Ensure the partnering institution maintains the required educational standards necessary.

2.1.7 Ensure that learning outcomes are appropriate to these guidelines and to the placement being undertaken. The outcomes must be clear within the degree specification and must also accommodate any requirements of relevant accrediting professional and statutory bodies.

2.1.8 Make students aware of University policy with regard to recognition, conversion and recording marks from placement. It should be clear, before the ISP commences, whether the experience will contribute to the final degree classification and, if it does not, how it will be assessed and marked. Please see Section 4 of this policy for further details.

2.1.9 Provide written guidelines and make students aware of the specific academic content, including aims, intended learning outcomes, assignment and assessment requirements and submission deadlines. Accurate records must be kept for monitoring purposes on all aspects of ISP learning such as securing placements, contact with students and complaint handling.

2.1.10 Provide designated staff responsible for supporting students throughout the placement process. Support will be for both academic and welfare matters, linking with the University Student Support & Accommodation Office where relevant. Support should be appropriate to the needs of the student. The staff should be familiar with programme regulations and the assessment requirements for the students and maintain contact with the student during the placement to discuss progress. It may be necessary to visit the student on placement to evaluate the success of the arrangement. In these cases, a written report of the visit should be completed and submitted to the Director of Learning and Teaching in the School.

2.1.11 Set up a formal written agreement between host institution, student and HWU, documenting the learning content and outcomes of the placement. This agreement highlights the commitments of the three parties, including the prompt action to resolve any issues before, during or following the placement. All three parties should sign the required agreement. Any revisions to the agreement should be formalised as soon as possible after the student’s arrival. The agreement should include termination and arbitration provisions which allow the institutions to suspend or withdraw from the agreement if any partner fails to fulfil its obligations.
2.1.12 Provide documents for the student to complete that will:

- confirm the student’s arrival on placement,
- notify HWU of contact details of student whilst abroad,
- notify HWU of family/friend contact details in the event of an emergency,
- provide a risk assessment for the Group Risk Officer at HWU,
- if required, a mark report sheet for the student to ensure each programme tutor completes at the host institution,
- confirm the student’s completion of placement.

2.1.13 Develop a clear, published strategy to ensure students will be equipped sufficiently to cope and to participate in a social context, where the language of the programme is English but the language of the host country is not. Where students are required to be assessed in a language other than English, this must be explicit in the agreement.

2.1.14 Ensure, where students have disabilities, that a flexible approach must be adopted to enable the learning outcomes to be achieved. Prior to departure, students should have the opportunity to address individual issues in relation to their specific situation. Guidance and support, on all aspects of disability, will be provided by HWU Student Support and Accommodation.

2.1.15 Ensure that the host institution has appropriate Health, Safety and Welfare arrangements in place and that all students are aware of both the host institution’s responsibilities and also their own in relation to health, safety and welfare. Students should also be made aware of any additional insurance requirements in addition to those covered by the University policy.

2.1.16 Raise any issues concerning health, safety and welfare; ethical considerations, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and equality of opportunity for students with the relevant area of HWU and the host institution.

2.1.17 Make the student aware of the continued, confidential support services, available at HWU to the student, should they encounter difficulties while away on placement. These services will include Student Support & Accommodation for counselling and advice on, for example, issues arising from disability, harassment and physical/mental health.

2.1.18 Provide necessary guidance to the student on the customs and culture of the country in question and on any health requirements. This may take the form of directing the students to appropriate websites.

2.1.19 Seek feedback from host institutions and participating students for continuous improvement. Requested feedback should include information regarding academic, financial, social and cultural issues as well as more practical matters such as accommodation and travel. Outcomes of ISP feedback should be collated, reviewed and made available to future students, considering such a placement.

2.1.20 Where possible, foster further links between both institutions with a view to developing strategic alliances such as research collaboration and exchange partnerships.

2.2 HWU Students
The student will be responsible for:

2.2.1 Sourcing, researching and securing their ISP. This can be done with the assistance of the resources and information available in HWU. The School/Institute at HWU may take an active role in helping the student to find an ISP.

2.2.2 Ensuring the ISP will be relevant to their academic and career objectives.
2.2.3 Seeking permission to undertake the ISP from the School, with supporting documentation on the host institution. As much information should be supplied to the Placement Co-ordinator so that they and the Director of Learning and Teaching in the School can provide confirmation that they are satisfied with the arrangements.

2.2.4 Ensuring that, if the language of tuition at the ISP is not English, they are adequately prepared in the language concerned. The student should be proactive in ensuring they can utilise any preparatory classes available at HWU to prepare them in good time for the placement. It is the responsibility of the student to ascertain any defined level of proficiency and where a student fails to meet that defined level, they will not be permitted to study abroad.

2.2.5 Informing, prior to placement, the HWU staff, designated to support the student on the ISP, of any health issues including any disabilities or issues that may affect their health and safety whilst on placement.

2.2.6 Making designated staff in the host institution and/or HWU, prior and during the placement, aware of any academic or pastoral issues.

2.2.7 Upholding and enhancing the good standing and reputation of HWU by their personal conduct. The student should maintain regular contact with the designated staff in HWU during the ISP. Any necessary documentation, assessments specified by the HWU Schools and host institution must be submitted within the required deadlines.

2.2.8 Complying with the host institution’s policies and guidelines relating to enrolment and course attendance.

2.2.9 Completing documents, provided by HWU that will:

- confirm the student’s arrival on placement,
- notify HWU of contact details of student whilst abroad,
- notify HWU of family/friend contact details in the event of an emergency,
- provide a risk assessment for the Group Risk Officer at HWU,
- if required, a mark report sheet for the student to ensure each programme tutor completes at the host institution,
- confirm the student’s completion of placement.

2.3 **Host Institution:**
The host institution is responsible for:

2.3.1 Appointing designated staff to be directly responsible for the student whilst on placement. This support can be from one or more areas of the institution and should cover all aspects of academic and pastoral support for the student.

2.3.2 Preparing a study/research programme before departure in consultation with the student and HWU. This programme should be documented and may be subject to amendment on arrival.

2.3.3 Providing the necessary facilities (for example, orientation programme, IT facilities, library) to the student.

2.3.4 Providing guidance and support with regard to how and where to apply for accommodation. Full details of the appropriate office responsible for this should be made readily available at the appropriate time.

2.3.5 Providing information and advice to the student on costs arising from placements including accommodation, travel, visas and information on the possible sources of financial support.
2.3.6 Ensuring the progress of the student is monitored and assessment forms completed as required. Where a member of staff from HWU visits the host institution, an appropriate member of staff should meet to discuss student progress. Where issues arise, the designated staff at HWU should be notified.

2.3.7 Providing, at the end of the placement, a transcript of grades to the student and to HWU, where relevant. The results of the assessed components of the ISP should be recorded on the transcript.

3. Academic Content and Programme Approval

3.1 Before a student may participate in an ISP, the relevant HWU degree programme must be correctly approved via the relevant University Studies Committee, which operates with the delegated authority of the Senate. The approval must be in accordance with recognised Ordinances, Regulations, Policies and Procedures. The Programme Director (or delegate) will be responsible for ensuring that the programme is approved through this channel.

3.2 The intended learning outcomes must be appropriate to the placement being undertaken and explicit in the relevant degree programme specification.

3.3 In addition to academic credit, Schools may give consideration to other programmes of accreditation and encourage students to participate as appropriate. For example an award by a professional awarding body linked to the student’s discipline could be considered.

4. Marking, Assessment, Exemption and Non-completion of Individual Study Placements (ISPs)

4.1 An academic year on an ISP, as an integral full-time part of a degree programme, will attract full credit, awarded on the basis of assessments carried out during the year and/or a subsequent assessment carried out on a student’s return. Placements of a shorter duration will attract academic credit on a pro-rata basis.

4.2 All ISPs, which are a formal part of the curriculum and studies at the appropriate level, would normally form part of the final award for the degree programme and contribute to the final award. Its weighting within a School or degree programme’s assessment criteria for the final award should be specified within the Programme Handbook and Programme Specification.

4.3 Grades awarded to students should be converted to the assessment system, normally used by a School and must be consistent for all students. The conversion criteria must be approved by the University. Credits should be calculated in relation to specific learning outcomes.

4.4 Where the placement is at an EU institution, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) enables transfer of credits between different country systems. One semester is equivalent to 30 ECTS credit points. Where the placement is at a non-EU institution, Schools should ensure that their students are assessed locally and appropriate conversion schemes developed to process the assessment results received from the host institution. Schools must ensure that the conversion schemes adopted allow parity of treatment among students on similar programmes attending different institutions.
4.5 The ISP assessment scheme may use a variety of methods appropriate to the programme of study. These may include marks for examinations/assessments undertaken during the placement, marks for assessments undertaken on return and/or marks for any additional work undertaken by the student as part of the programme.

4.6 The placement’s contribution to a programme’s overall assessment must be transparent.

4.7 HWU has in place a system which will allow appeals from students against a) the marks awarded by the host institution during the placement and b) the marks awarded to the student after conversion.

4.8 If the placement is an assessed component, or a compulsory element of a programme of study leading to an award or qualification, the results must be submitted for consideration to a Board of Examiners. Placement assignments undertaken by a student, which contribute to the programme mark, should be available for monitoring by the appropriate external examiner.

4.9 HWU will ensure that details of all of a student's results are fully recorded on a transcript. Where the host institution does not directly assess a student's placement, the School should clearly explain the process for assessment.

4.10 HWU must have clear procedures for managing exemptions from placements which are otherwise required for the successful completion of a programme of study.

4.11 There should be clear statements of the academic consequences of non-completion by students of any part of a placement (which may be for reasons beyond their control). All programmes must make provision for the consequences arising from failure on placement. Information issued to students by Schools must clearly explain the implications of failure.

5. Approval and Record Retention of the Individual Study Placement (ISP)

5.1 There is no requirement for an inter-institutional agreement to be in place between institutions for a student to undertake an ISP.

5.2 A student can only participate in an ISP once the placement has been fully approved in accordance with this Guidance.

5.3 The School is responsible for ensuring that the necessary governance, or other approval, exists to deliver the programmes of study.

5.4 A request to undertake an ISP must be submitted by the student to the School with supporting information as to the suitability of the placement (please see Appendix A for recommended supporting information).

5.5 The Programme Director and Director of Learning and Teaching in the School must provide confirmation that they are satisfied with the arrangements. This will be provided on the Approval Summary Form - the template is available at http://www.hw.ac.uk/quality/exchange.htm

5.6 The completed Approval Summary Form and supporting documentation should be submitted to the Academic Registry which will retain records of each ISP centrally. The Academic Registry will ensure that the Approval Summary Form is signed off by:

- Programme Director
- Director of Learning and Teaching
5.7 The Legal Services Manager, Research and Enterprise Services and Director of Governance and Compliance Services should also sign off the Approval Summary Form, if there are any legislative implications.

5.8 The Academic Registrar and Deputy Secretary (ARD) should also sign off the Approval Summary Form if there are any implications from the ISP for the Academic Registry or the student services provided by the University.

5.9 At any stage, any concerns with the placement proposals will be reported back to the School for consideration and action where required.

5.10 It is expected that the process of approval will take 2-3 weeks to complete unless there are issues still to be resolved. Formal approval is a yes/no decision and should not involve a long set of questions or need negotiation during the process.

5.11 Records of ISPs, together with Approval Summary Forms will be held centrally within the Academic Registry and Schools should forward the records to Rachel Bourhill, Academic Registry who will record statistics for the University.

6. Internal Audit

6.1 Before any ISP is undertaken, all programmes and placement arrangements must be fully approved by HWU.

6.2 Students may only be accepted onto fully approved programmes. Any re-approval will be undertaken as part of the Internal Review as described in the Internal Audit Handbook. The Audit team will consider inter alia the Annual Monitoring reports, Student Achievement and feedback, historical numbers, the forward business plan and an assessment of the ongoing risks.

7. Quality Assurance /Pastoral Visits

7.1 For each placement, Schools must assure themselves that students will receive a beneficial academic and cultural experience appropriate to their programme. Attention should be paid to the following:

- Examination of the academic content, standards and learning outcomes of the placement and its value in relation to the remainder of the programme.
- Regular contact between the staff at both institutions, including progress reports on students.
- Formal mechanism for student evaluation of the placement, both during and following completion.
- Process to be undertaken if a student is asked to leave a placement or if insurmountable problems arise.
- Appropriateness of Health & Safety procedures in place being consistent with those of HWU.

7.2 HWU has a number of different mechanisms for quality assurance. Annual Partner Monitoring and Review Reports are required from Schools and should include ISP institutions. These reports are returned each September for the end of the academic year and are reviewed by the School delivering the programme, the Dean and Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching) and by the Quality and Standards Committee. They include a summary of student/staff feedback on the programme and student attainment. Schools also obtain information on the quality of student attainment through the Examination Board overview.
7.3 Schools should evaluate the progress and experience of students on placement from different perspectives – for example, students with a disability and international students. Where required, advice should be sought from Student Support and Accommodation.

7.4 During the course of a placement, the School may wish to visit the host institution, ideally while the student is present, to evaluate the success of the arrangement and to discuss any matters of concern. Schools should have a clear policy relating to the frequency of such visits and will need to be prepared to cover the costs of these visits.

8 Fees

8.1 Students undertaking ISPs will not qualify for Erasmus funding and will have to pay tuition fees to both HWU and the host institution.

8.2 For Scottish students, the entitlement to loans for study/living cost support, during the placement abroad, will only be maintained by the Students Award Agency for Scotland (SAAS) if the ISP is a compulsory part of the student’s degree programme. A compulsory programme is classed by SAAS as a period without which the student would not be able to graduate.

8.3 Where the ISP is not a compulsory element of the degree programme, a student’s entitlement to loans for study will not be maintained by SAAS for that period abroad.

8.4 Rest of UK students should contact their own funding body to determine whether there will be financial support available.

8.5 Overseas students are responsible for arranging their own financial support.

Sue Moore
Institutional Exchange Co-ordinator (IEC)
Academic Registry
4 December 2012
Appendix A

This is a recommended summary of information to be submitted by the student regarding the proposed Individual Study Placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student details</th>
<th>Name, School and matriculation number</th>
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| Details of host institution | Placement contact details – name of academic mentor, address, e-mail, web-site.  
Information on institution – literature such as prospectus and International Student guide, statements on managing academic standards, professional recognition and relationships with UK institutions. |
| Period of placement | Dates of proposed placement and academic calendar for that year. |
| Details of academic aspects of proposed placement | Programme structure, content, use of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), where relevant as marking criteria, delivery style (lectures/assignments), class sizes and learning outcomes. |
| Facilities and resources for students | Programme materials, teaching spaces, library, IT facilities and other facilities or methods of learning. |
| Process by which student performance will be incorporated into Heriot-Watt University progression decisions. | Procedure for ensuring HWU will use assessment results appropriately and defining equivalence of standards; arrangements for marks of host institutions to be considered by School Progression Board. |
| Student Support | Confirmation that academic/welfare mentor will be in place; student support and welfare facilities available; accommodation provision and support. |
| Healthcare and Insurance | Healthcare facilities/provisions available to students. Details of any additional healthcare insurance costs payable by the student at the host institution. |
| Statement from student | Objectives of the placement, including confirmation that a Risk Assessment has been completed and forwarded to the University Risk and Insurance Office. |
| Statement of support from School | Statement completed and signed by Programme Director and Director of Learning & Teaching. The statement should confirm the School’s support for the proposed placement and that tuition fees will be payable. |