Guidance on student placements

1. **Introduction**

1.1 This guidance takes into account the chapter of the QAA *UK Quality Code in Higher Education* that includes work-based and placement learning. The guidance is applicable for programmes where students undertake any College activity defined as placement learning where the College retains some responsibility for the student. Such activity may be a compulsory or voluntary part of a programme and may or may not be assessed as part of the final award for the programme. These guidelines also cover those circumstances where students have arranged their own placement with a placement provider with the approval of the College as part of an academic programme.

1.2 It is important to note that the College’s legal, moral and ethical obligations relevant to items such as Duty of Care, health and safety, insurance, risk management and equality and diversity legislation also apply to students on placement. Furthermore, in relation to students with a disability, the legislation stipulates that in cases where the College arranges for a third party to provide education, training or other related services for students on its behalf, this provision remains the responsibility of the College and so is covered by the legislation.

2. **Definition of placement**

2.1 For the purposes of this guidance, a student placement is a partnership arrangement that includes a planned period of experience in an environment external to King’s (including those in industry, teacher education, healthcare professions, internships) to help students develop particular skills, knowledge and understanding.

2.2 Types of Placement activity in operation at the College that are covered by this guidance include the following:

- **Practice Placement/Clinical Placement:** The opportunity provided is necessary to achieve the relevant learning outcomes and/or the award of credit for a module or programme of study and contribute to the learning leading to professional qualifications for which they have a statutory or regulatory responsibility (includes clinical practice, clinical attachment, medical elective);

- **Work-based Placement:** The opportunity provided is necessary to achieve the relevant learning outcomes and/or the award of credit for a module or programme of study and contributes to the learning leading to their degree and is specifically to enable accreditation to a professional body that is not statutory or regulatory;

- **Industrial Placement:** The opportunity provided is necessary to achieve the relevant learning outcomes and/or the award of credit for a module or programme of study whose purpose is not primarily education (includes research undertaken in a non-academic environment (Laboratory));

- **Internship Placement:** The internship placement is a planned period of experience to help students develop particular skills, knowledge and understanding through a planned period of study for which credit is given towards a programme of study at the College using the Internship Host Agreement in accordance with the College’s regulations.

- **Professional Placement:** In a non-clinical environment the opportunity provided is necessary to achieve the relevant learning outcomes and/or the award of credit for a module or programme of study and contribute to the learning leading to professional qualifications for which they have a statutory or regulatory responsibility (teacher education, legal practice etc).
2.3 Placements are not restricted to, but most typically take place in locations other than College premises, which would be the normal location of study for the student. Placement involves the engagement, support and co-operation of a placement learning provider such as an internship host organisation.

3. **Rationale for the placement**
3.1 The rationale for a placement should be clear and considered during programme design, approval and monitoring as part of normal quality assurance procedures.

3.2 The aims, objectives and appropriate learning outcomes for the placement should be clearly defined and agreed upon.

3.3 The department/division should consider the equity of opportunity for learning in the work/practice arena.

3.4 The benefits of placements over and above those related directly to the discipline should be identified.

4. **Assessment of the placement**
4.1 The appropriateness of the assessment for placement learning should be considered during programme design, approval and monitoring as part of normal quality assurance procedures and best practice. Assessment models must aim to measure a student’s use of critical reflection and application of key learned concepts and theories to the experiential working environment such as that of a placement.

4.2 The department/division should undertake an assessment of the health and safety aspects of the placement provision in consultation with the College’s Health and Safety Office and the placement provider. A guide to risk profiling and risk reducing actions adapted from UCEA Health and Safety Guidance for the placement of Higher Education Students should be used as a guide for factors that may affect a student undertaking a placement activity.

4.3 There should be a clear understanding of the assessment requirements and criteria between students and academic representatives and students must be appropriately prepared for the assessment.

4.4 Placement assessment in most circumstances is the responsibility of academic and/or other representatives of the College. In the case of placement providers being involved in assessment, they must be fully prepared for their role by the department/division.

4.5 Where placements are a compulsory/formal requirement or standard component of the programme, ways to ensure the specified learning opportunities are available to all students must be considered.

5. **Selection and allocation**
5.1 Students should have equal opportunity of access to a placement to ensure they can benefit from the learning it provides. In the case of disability, this means a placement provider having systems in place to address and respond to specific need.

5.2 Any process of selection or allocation of students to placements should be clear and transparent and notified to all students.
6. **Roles, responsibilities and requirements of the department/division**

6.1 There should be clear written information and guidelines on the placement in the form of a written agreement and this should be disseminated to providers and students.

6.2 The department/division should use this agreement to clearly outline all terms and conditions of the placement. The academic and pastoral services that are provided to students whilst on placement must also be clearly outlined and communicated.

6.3 The department/division should maintain effective channels of communication with students and placement providers about the placement at all times as part of effective monitoring and evaluation.

6.4 There should be at least one identified point of contact at King’s for students whilst they are away on placement. There should also be an identified point of contact at the placement provider or host organisation for students whilst they are on placement.

6.5 There should be an identified point of contact at King’s for the placement provider or host organisation.

6.6 Records of adequate legal, financial and health and safety compliance should be documented and records kept of any applicable cover.

6.7 For any form of work-based or placement learning being undertaken by a student as part of a programme of study, such as an internship, a formal written agreement must be completed to confirm the placement. It must be signed by both the placement provider/host organisation and the student and electronic copies kept by both parties.

6.8 Agreements from other institutions must be verified for accuracy and all forms of legal, moral and ethical compliance by the department/division. Any external agreement not provided or developed exclusively by the College can only be signed by a representative in possession of full legally-binding authority.

6.9 In some circumstances such matters may be covered as part of a major contract for clinical placements, for example within the Faculties of Life Sciences and Medicine and Nursing and Midwifery. This may include an exchange of confirmation via letter, email or memorandum of understanding as appropriate to the nature of the placement.

7. **Roles, responsibilities and requirements of the placement provider**

7.1 All information concerning roles, responsibilities and requirements of a placement provider or host organisation should be explicit, clear and available in written format.

7.2 Placement providers must provide the opportunity for the student to gain demonstrable skills and knowledge which adequately match the learning outcomes of their programme of academic study.

7.3 Placement providers must contribute to completion of a formal written agreement which outlines the full terms and conditions of a placement, including mutual aims and objectives and student duties and responsibilities and display acceptance/understanding of relevant College policy.
7.4 Placement providers must be able to demonstrate possession of their own policy, procedure and best practice in support of all legal, moral and ethical obligations relevant to a placement. This includes being able to provide evidence of adequate and appropriate health and safety and risk management procedures, insurance, and adherence to equality and diversity legislation relevant to placements. Copies of evidence must be available to both students and the department/division.

7.5 Providers must engage and communicate with both the student and department/division throughout the entire duration of the placement, providing updates on progress or issues as requested. Providers must also provide the opportunity for the student to feedback after completion of the placement.

8. **Roles, responsibilities and requirements of the student**
8.1 All information concerning roles, responsibilities and requirements of a student should be explicit, clear and available in written format.

8.2 Students should consult regularly with their department/division to prepare themselves adequately for the placement and ensure that they are aware of ethical and health and safety issues or other issues relevant to the placement.

8.3 As a representative of the College, students must take responsibility for meeting the norms and expectations for professional conduct in the particular field of work that they are undertaking.

8.4 Students should maintain consistent and effective communication about the placement with their department and placement provider and provide feedback on any issues to their department/division as requested.

9. **Quality assurance**
9.1 The College is responsible for adhering to any formal, legal and ethical considerations concerning placements within the UK or abroad. Departments/divisions must make every effort to evaluate individual placement opportunities and practices against a strict internal and external quality assurance process checklist before making available to students. This includes validating each placement closely against relevant government and College policy to help ensure that any student placement is valuable, measurable, safe, non-exploitative, and as closely aligned to a path of academic study and personal/professional career development as possible.

9.2 As part of the monitoring and evaluation of internship placement rationale, organisation and practice, departments/divisions should use feedback from students and placement providers to make appropriate changes and improvements to quality and best practice.

9.3 Faculty (Institute/School) Education Committees (or equivalent) should monitor the operation of placement learning and report on such activity in their annual reports to the College Education Committee.

9.4 The College will provide training for staff involved in placement learning so that staff are qualified, resourced and competent in their understanding of student needs, and so they are able to fulfil the relevant requirements of their roles.

9.5 The Study Abroad and Internships Offices provide College-wide support and guidance for students who are pursuing placement opportunities, both in the UK and
abroad. The key focus is on the development of accredited internships modules which are assessed as part of degree programmes, embedding employability directly into the curriculum via work-based learning. Opportunities for this exist in a growing number of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across the College. The Head of Study Abroad and Manager of the Internship programme authorises placement agreements on behalf of the College; where the agreement departs from established templates, the Head of Study Abroad and Manager of the Internship programme shall seek confirmation from the Director of Governance and Legal Affairs Management and other appropriate staff before doing so.

9.6 Any student completing a placement or participating in any form of work-based learning outside of their home country such as through Erasmus or language programmes will have different visa restrictions concerning the number of weekly hours that they can participate, the length and timing of the placement, and the acceptance of paid employment.

9.7 Whilst the College has an obligation to exercise a level of care to all students under Duty of Care, it is ultimately the responsibility of the student to verify the accuracy of information and requirements regarding placements from the relevant destination country, prior to undertaking an placement abroad. The College must show due diligence and full consideration of the relevant regulations and policy of the host country in which a student is completing a placement. Regularly updated information and guidance is available via the Study Abroad and Internships Offices, Student Advice and International Student Support, and Careers and Employability.