

ACADEMIC BOARD – MEETING 8/04 (23 SEPTEMBER 2004)

WORKING GROUP ON FIELDWORK PLACEMENTS

Final Report

The University has an extensive range and variety of subjects involving placements and internships in non-university settings that enhance teaching and learning. In some professional faculties, placements and internships are required for completion of the degree. In other faculties, they constitute, or are an integral part of, optional subjects. Internships and placements are growing, including in international venues. A listing of 'Student Off-Campus Activities' prepared in October 2002 ran to 37 pages (Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Committee (TALQAC) meeting 8/02, item 3.1.3).

While there is widespread support for fieldwork and placements in professional and work-related settings, there has been concern expressed about aspects of management and quality control in this area. Where fieldwork and placement subjects are exempted from the regular 'Quality of Teaching' surveys, practices of quality control vary, with some programs having their own tailored quality control procedures and others having none. This has led to ongoing student concerns and complaints.

These were first aired in the 'Strengthening Links Issues Forum 4/12/2000: Students on Placement' where a series of issues about management and quality controls in placement subjects were discussed. It was decided to recommend that 'a working group be set up to develop a set of guiding principles to be included in all faculty placement policies'. Subsequently, TALQAC established a working group to review field placements which had a number of meetings and produced a draft report. Working group members from various faculties confirmed that practices vary widely across the University. The UMPA representative reported that student complaints about the quality of certain placements and assessment practices are continuing.

The TALQAC Working Group report on ensuring quality of off-campus teaching and learning is to complement the 'Off Campus Travel and Work Policy' (attachment 1). This policy is the result of an extensive review by the Compliance Office aimed at ensuring that travel and work by university staff and students at off-campus locations is undertaken in a safe manner. The policy applies to all activities undertaken away from University-managed sites. It covers risk identification, assessment and control measures. Curiously, the report has a narrow definition of 'fieldwork' as being 'external to a building or structure, such as parks, gardens or roads', whereas faculties use the term 'fieldwork' in broader ways to cover off-campus locations of students in buildings.

The TALQAC Working Group recommends broad guidelines for ensuring the quality of teaching and learning in all placements and internship teaching and learning activities that take place away from the University-managed sites. Because of the large range and diversity of subjects and settings, each faculty should have the primary responsibility for ensuring the proper design, implementation and monitoring of quality control procedures in its own departments and programs. Where the standard 'Quality of Teaching' instrument is not suited, a variation or equivalent instrument or set of procedures should be designed, in liaison with TALQAC, the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) and the University Planning Office (UPO).

As part of the approval process, Academic Programs Committee (APC) should ensure that all new programs and subjects involving off-campus teaching and learning have appropriate quality control procedures. There should be particular attention to ensuring that assessment procedures are clearly specified. TALQAC should include quality assurance of subjects involving fieldwork and placements in its review audits.

Recommendations

1. That each faculty have a policy covering all its off-campus placements and internships that ensures quality control procedures and is consistent with overall university policy.

2. That each faculty review regularly its existing programs and subjects with off-campus placements and internship components to ensure compliance with their policy.
3. That APC ensure as part of the approval process that all new programs and subjects with off-campus components have appropriate quality control procedures, including clear specification of assessment, in compliance with their faculty's policy.
4. That TALQAC include quality assurance of teaching and learning for off-campus placements and fieldwork in its review audits.
5. That no exceptions be made to exempt off-campus teaching and learning from compliance with faculty policy, student evaluation and TALQAC review.
6. That where the standard 'Quality of Teaching' questionnaire is not suited to particular instances, that variations of 'Quality of Teaching' or alternative equivalent instruments be designed, in consultation with TALQAC, the UPO and CSHE.

Professor Pip Pattison, Head, School of Behavioural Science (Chair)

Professor Brian Galligan, Head, Department of Political Science (former Chair)

Ms Jenny Stephens, Director, Academic Services (Student Programs)

Ms Gillian Webb, Deputy Head, School of Physiotherapy

Mr Lachlan Williams, former President, University of Melbourne Postgraduate Association

Off Campus Travel and Work Policy

7.1.1. Purpose

To ensure travel and work by University staff and students at off campus locations is undertaken in a safe manner.

7.1.2. Application

This policy applies for all activities away from University managed sites. This includes travel between the University campus and the site.

7.1.3. Legislation

Occupational Health and Safety Act
Environment Protection Act 1970

7.1.4. References

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
PPP Section 14
FPP Section 8

7.1.5. Definitions

Workplace (on campus)

Any place whether or not in a building or structure where staff and students work which is owned or managed by the University, or is a recognised University department within a facility.

Workplace (off campus)

Any place whether or not in a building or structure where staff and students work which is not owned or managed by the University.

Placement

Work, learning or study undertaken by staff or students at a facility for the purposes of research or teaching for a set period of time.

Site Visit

Any closely supervised tour or day trip to a facility for the purposes of study or research.

Conference and Research Activities

Any activity where staff or students travel to another facility for the purposes of a conference or short term (1 week) research project.

Field Work (metropolitan)

Work, study or research authorised by the University and conducted by staff or students at an off-campus site which is in a metropolitan or suburban location external to a building or structure, such as parks, gardens or roads.

Remote Fieldwork

Work or study undertaken at a site which is more than 5 km from a facility with phone or radio communication.

Other Off Campus Activities

Any University supervised or coordinated route, travel or excursion to an off campus location for the purposes of extracurricular activities.

7.1.6. Responsibilities

7.1.6.1. Deans, Heads of Department

Ensure implementation and compliance with this Policy for all staff and students within their Faculty/Department.

Ensure processes are in place to authorise all off campus work carried out within the Department and ensure appropriate risk identification assessment and control measures have been undertaken.

Ensure that staff and students are competent and fit to undertake off campus trips, and that the students are appropriately supervised during these excursions.

Ensure that information regarding the whereabouts and contact details of staff / students is available for use by University staff on a need-to-know basis.

7.1.6.2. Departmental Managers

Obtain current and relevant student details, including medical information, emergency contacts and any special requirements to be assessed prior to the activity taking place.

Ensure that adequate systems are in place for appropriate training and qualifications of staff undertaking supervision of students on off campus activities.

Provide adequate documentation outlining safety and emergency procedures and other environmental, health and safety issues to provide warnings and guidelines for staff and students.

7.1.6.3. Supervisors

Complete a ['Guideline Form For Off Campus Travel And Work Policy'](#) in conjunction with staff / students undertaking the off campus activity and obtain relevant medical information and other relevant forms.

7.1.6.4. Staff & Students

Consider the four (4) aspects outlined in the Procedure and Guidelines section to ensure the relevant documentation and authorisations are completed and submitted to their Supervisor or Departmental Manager. Complete a ['Guideline Form For Off Campus Travel And Work Policy'](#) in conjunction with supervisor.

Comply with directions given by Senior University Staff as a result of any change to the assessment of the level of safety of the site of the off campus activity.

Guidelines:

- * For local (within Australia) travel comply with Departmental Guidelines on travel and fieldwork.
- * For overseas travel obtain DFAT Travel Risk advice on the location of intended travel and seek relevant approval as detailed below.
- * Obtain medical advice to ensure fitness for participation in the off campus activity.
- * Ensure appropriate vaccinations have been undertaken where required.
- * Complete relevant authorisation forms for travel.
- * Provide a current itinerary to the Department.
- * Immediately notify the Department of an incident, and report via an S3 form.

Students are recommended to take out travel insurance.

7.1.6.5. Risk Management Office

Advice if needed should be obtained from the Risk Management Office on 8344 3444.

7.1.7. Procedure and Guidelines

The four areas of risk which must be considered prior to undertaking an off campus activity are:

- * Consider your fitness for travel and participation in the activity including vaccinations
- * Determine the safety of the method of travel to the site
- * Assess the risks of the location that you are travelling to
- * Assess the risks of the activity

7.1.7.1. Assess your fitness for Travel and Participation

Consult a doctor or University Health Service to discuss any conditions that may affect the ability to travel or participate in the activity.

Complete the [Medical Questionnaire for Off Campus Activities](#).

Travel overseas may require vaccinations. Discuss travel plans with your treating practitioner or University Health Service.

Complete the [Overseas Travel Vaccination Guidelines](#),

7.1.7.2. Mode of Transport

If you are travelling by Car - check the University's [Driving Safety Policy](#) Section 7.4 EHSM
- consider special risks associated with using 4WD vehicles or trucks.

If you are travelling by Air - check the [Safe Flying Guidelines](#)
- consider the flight time and countries that you may have to stopover at.

7.1.7.3. Assess the Location

A system must be in place to prevent or reduce the risk or injury to staff or student.

Consider the following:

- the remoteness of the location and distance to assistance
- the terrain to be covered and how it will be travelled over
- the climate including altitude, daylight allowance and season
- geopolitical climate and potential civil unrest

- security and safety provisions
- emergency and first aid needs - check [Section 8.3 of the EHSM](#)
- communication requirements such as mobile phones

Special considerations for travel to overseas locations:

The University has procedures and an approval process to travel to overseas based on advice issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Read the Approval Requirements:

[Overseas Travel Approval Considerations for Students](#)

[Overseas Travel Approval Considerations for Staff](#)

The Guiding Principles:

- All decisions regarding staff or student permission to travel to an overseas destination for University related purposes must be based on advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).
- Determination of the essentiality of travel and exemptions from adhering to DFAT advice may only be made by Deans of Faculty for faculty staff, Vice-Principals for central administration staff and the Vice-Principal and Academic Registrar for students.
- Special circumstances may apply to travel undertaken by International Students.
- Students and staff who are overseas for University-related purposes are required immediately to comply with any direction given by the Vice Chancellor, a dean or Vice-Principal as a result of a change in the assessment of the level of safety of the particular overseas destination
- The University will retain current and accurate information regarding the whereabouts and contact details of students and staff members travelling overseas for University-related purposes and this information will be accessible at short notice.
- Deans, Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Vice-Principals are accountable for the implementation and oversight of this policy.

Find out about DFAT Travel Advice and Warnings for the country you are traveling to at the [RMO Travel Page](#)

Maintenance of Records:

1. The Director, Risk Management Office has responsibility for maintaining an accurate and current database of DFAT advice for overseas destinations that is accessible by all staff and students and for providing advice about, and communicating any changes in, DFAT advice to students and staff.
2. Heads of Department are responsible for furnishing the relevant Faculty General Manager or Vice-Principal with details of travel itineraries and contact details for faculty staff members travelling overseas for University-related purposes.

Original documents including the guideline form for off campus travel and work policy and associated risk assessments and completed checklists etc should be maintained by the department and placed in the student/staff members personal file.

3. Faculty General Managers and Vice-Principals are responsible for retaining current and accurate information regarding the whereabouts and contact details of faculty staff or central administrative staff respectively travelling overseas for University-related purposes. This information must be accessible for use by University staff on a need-to-know basis at short notice.

7.1.7.4. Assess and Control Risks of the Activity

Identify the hazards of the activity, and undertake a documented risk assessment to determine adequate control measures if the activity is potentially high risk.

Hazards / Risks to consider:

- competency and level of training required
- duration of the activity
- potential negative impact on the environment due to the activity
- supervisory provisions and number of staff and students

Examples of LOW risk Activities requiring no documented risk assessment are:

- attendance at a conference for less than 1 week
- lecturing or teaching at other educational facilities

Examples of MEDIUM / HIGH risk activities requiring completion of a risk assessment are:

- working at a medical research facility during a placement
- working in mines, caves, rivers etc
- diving, boating, skiing etc

7.1.7.5. Placement and Fieldwork Guides

[Check the Placement Guide](#)

[Check the Fieldwork Guide](#)

7.1.7.6. Insurance and Privacy Guidelines

Consider the need for Insurance to cover:

- Overseas Travel Insurance
- Overseas Ex-Pat Medical Insurance
- Equipment insurance for University owned items

Find details on the University [RMO Insurance Home Page](#) or contact the Insurance Manager on 8344 3444

The University has a statutory obligation to comply with the Information Privacy Act 2000 and the Health Records Act 2001 in its treatment of personal and health information. Read the Privacy Policy Statement.

<http://www.unimelb.edu.au/ehsm/7.html#7.1>