

Document Title	Placements Policy
Accountable person and department	Directorate Of Educational Excellence and Student Outcomes, DEESO
Author – Job Title	Deputy Academic Registrar (Records and Partnerships)
Document date	May 2026
Effective from	July 2026
Review date	July 2027
Version	3
Related policies	Attendance and Monitoring Policy Student Visa Attendance and Engagement Policy Academic Regulations

St Mary's University is committed to improve student retention and maintain accurate student records for internal and external submissions. The purpose of this policy is to ensure students receive appropriate academic, pastoral and final advice, before, during and after undertaking an optional or mandatory placements.

This policy works in conjunction with the Attendance and Engagement Policy, Student Visa Attendance and Engagement Policy and Academic Regulations also providing guidance for academic and professional services staff on how to progress students onto and from a placement, in a timely manner.

This policy applies to all placement types including Undergraduate students on a year-long placement. The policy should be followed in conjunction with any handbooks or specifications related to those on work placement modules or placements equivalent to 20 credits or attendance requirements less than two semesters.

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to make staff and students on all placement programmes aware of the University's processes and requirements when partaking on a year-long placement. This policy applies to all students on placement-associated programmes, except where PSRB or other regulations already govern placement activity and completion.
- 1.2 The University encourages active participation in placements to aid students in their development of practical skills, reasoning, and judgement, with the opportunity to reflect on and prepare for employment.
- 1.3 This policy gives guidance on processes and procedures for development, delivery, and monitoring of placements and associated work-based learning, outside of on-campus taught programmes at St Mary's University.

2. DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

Include types of placements offered on SMU courses: work placement modules, integrated placements, year-long placements, etc

Student: a person registered onto a St Mary's programme at any level, at any mode of study

International Student: a student holding a student visa, with sponsorship from the University

Module: a single unit of study within a course, with its own teaching assessment and credits

Placement: a period of work or work-related experience that students complete as part of their course, in a real workplace, related to their course of study

Clinical Placements: a practice-based placement taking place within a healthcare or related environment, requiring services to patients or the public

Statutory Placements: a placement taking place within a statutory setting, requiring students to carry out tasks involving high-risk decision-making and legal interventions. e.g. MBBS Medical degrees, PGCE, MSc Physiotherapy

Work Placement Module: a credit-bearing module in which students complete structured learning in a workplace setting, to meet defined learning outcomes

Integrated Placements: compulsory work-based learning experiences, embedded within the academic curriculum and designed to connect workplace practice with taught theory. Integrated placements can be taken as a module or year-long, depending on the requirements of the programme of study.

Work-Based Learning: authentic and structured learning opportunities within a workplace setting, designed to meet academic requirements in addition to employer needs. Work-based learning may be required in all forms of placements

Year-Long Placement: a placement undertaken in place of the standard taught, theory-based, on campus learning in one academic year. Can be taken between Level 5 and Level 6 of an Undergraduate programme and Year 2 of a Postgraduate programme

Placement Tutor: a designated member of university staff who provides academic oversight of a student's placement, ensuring the placement learning environment, support and monitoring arrangements. Responsible for adherence to the programme's academic and regulatory requirements and alignment with QAA guidance

Placement Provider: an external organisation or workplace, working in partnership with the University, that delivers a planned period of work-based learning. This provides a structured experience that contributes to programme learning outcomes and forms part of an approved placement arrangement

Learning Outcomes: clear, measurable statements describing what a student is expected to achieve and understand upon completion of a module, placement or programme

Programme Specifications: concise documents outlining a programme's aims, structure and intended learning outcomes for students and external reviewers

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The University believes that placement learning forms an integral component of several programmes at St Mary's University.

3.2 The credit value of a placement and its contribution to a programme can be defined and set out in the relevant programme specifications. This includes any learning outcomes and requirements stipulated by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB), where applicable.

3.3 Year-long placement modules are valued at zero (0) credits and assessed on a pass or fail basis, with requirements for a pass outlined in the module descriptors and programme handbooks.

3.4 Integrated placement modules are usually valued at a minimum of 20 credits, with an overall weighting of the degree subject to programme specifications. Integrated clinical placements contribute to the overall credit value of modules taken within the academic year.

3.4.1 Some integrated placements are embedded within modules at various levels of a programme and are mandatory within the degree contract and/or to meet PSRB requirements.

4. PLACEMENT PREPARATION

4.1 The following preparation guidelines are set out for all students preparing to enter onto any form of placement. This is in addition to any statutory, programme or module specific requirements.

4.2 Before commencing a placement, students must ensure the following:

Academic Status

- Academic progression requirements must be met for entry onto a placement year
- Resumption from any authorised leave must be confirmed with Registry Services and the relevant Course Lead
- Trailing of credits or progression outcomes of interrupted studies, where up to 40 credits require re-assessments for completion, are not permitted onto year-long placements
- Academic progression requirements not met, may result in refusal of entry onto a year-long placement

Fitness and Sustainability

- Where applicable, students must meet all fitness to practice expectations
- Students should disclose any disability-related or placement-specific, reasonable adjustment requirements, to ensure appropriate support can be arranged in line with the University policies and legal obligations
- Failure to disclose any disability-related requirements, placement-specific reasonable adjustments, risks or support needs may limit the University's ability to provide appropriate support. The University cannot be held responsible for unmet support needs where the relevant information has not been disclosed

Preparation Activities

- Students must familiarise themselves with the expectations of the placement provider and professional behaviours
- Students must review the University's [Wellbeing on Placement](#) guidance
- Any ambitions related to personal development should be linked to placement learning outcomes, with guidance from the Placement Tutor
- Students must be allocated and receive confirmation of their Placement Tutor, confirmed by the relevant Faculty team

- Under employment policy, International students require a letter from St Mary's University as Sponsor to provide to the provider outlining visa conditions and attendance requirements

4.3 Students are permitted to source their own year-long placements, however these must be reviewed and approved by the University's Placements Team and Placement Tutor, to ensure all opportunities align with the academic requirements and sector guidance on safe and effective placement learning.

4.3.1 Self-sought placements may be permitted for year-long and other placement periods, as appropriate and approved by the programme.

4.3.2 Students must consult their Programme Handbook and Course Lead for detailed information on available placement opportunities and specific requirements. This is particularly important for programmes with prescribed or professionally regulated placements such as MBBS, Allied Health, Education and , Foundation programmes..

4.4 Confirmation with the Placement Provider must be confirmed no later than 1st August.

4.5 Placement activity for all forms of placements, must fall within a single academic year; between 1st August and 31st July.

4.6 Students who have missed the deadline will be required to inform the Placement Tutor and Registry Services, to transfer onto the standard version of their degree programme.

4.7 Late placement confirmation or those not confirmed by 1st August, will not be accepted for Placement Providers overseas and within the UK.

5. UKVI CONDITIONS

5.1 The University will continue to maintain student visa sponsorship for eligible students, however, any period of more than 60 days of inactivity may result in visa sponsorship being refused. Any inactivity of up to 60 consecutive days will require clear and documented justification, which will be reported to the Home Office, explaining the reason for maintaining a student's sponsorship.

5.2 Student visa holders undertaking a year-long placement must confirm eligibility with the Student Visa 5.3 International students must be registered onto a programme that includes a year-long placement and reflected on their sponsorship, to be eligible for application for a placement opportunity.

5.4 International students on a standard programme may be permitted to transfer onto programmes that include a year-long placement.

5.5.1 Students will be required to successfully complete their course to date and apply for a student visa extension application.

5.6 Placement modules or work-based learning modules must not exceed 50% of the total length of the degree programme, unless required for statutory placements required for successful completion of the course.

5.7 Students must remain fully enrolled at the University while on a placement in order for the University to remain as their visa sponsor. They will not be sponsored by their placement provider.

5.8 Placements or work-based learning that are not integral to the degree programme or not assessed, may only be undertaken part-time during term-time, as per the working hours permitted on their visa or full-time during vacation periods.

5.9 Students holding a visa that restricts work or prohibits placements will not be permitted to undertake a placement of any type or duration.

5.10 Students, Academic staff and Professional Services teams have a shared responsibility for ensuring placement arrangements are compliant with visa regulations. Placement proposals that do not clearly meet the requirements will not be approved for international students requiring University sponsorship.

5.11 UKVI Compliance responsibilities:

- Students must stay connected to their Placement Tutor and sponsor, during the course of their work placement.
- Recorded evidence of Placement attendance and progress E.g. Monthly timesheets, attendance logs.
- As a sponsor, the University is obligated to report mandatory placement details to the Home Office within 10 working days for each placement. Guidance for Employers states that the sponsor must provide a letter for the placement provider, which contains the terms and conditions of the placement and explain how the placement is assessed.
- Placements can be paid or unpaid. Some placements can be full time, even in term time (depending on programme requirements) For more information about your potential employer's duties read the [Home Office's guidance for employers](#).

6. CONFIRMATION AND APPROVAL OF PLACEMENT

6.1 All placements must be formally approved by the University before commencement. Approval may be based on but not limited to the following:

- Suitability of learning environment
- Ability of the Placement Provider to support and supervise workplace activities
- Alignment with the programme specifications and learning outcomes
- Compliance with University policies on health, safety, wellbeing, risk assessment and values
- Any other programme-specific, PSRB or regulatory requirements, as deemed appropriate

6.2 Students will not be permitted to commence a placement until confirmation of written approval has been issued.

6.3 Students will not be permitted to defer entry onto a year-long placement.

6.4 Confirmed placements for student visa holders must be reported to UKVI and include the following information:

- Placement Provider name and address details
- Placement start and end dates
- Any changes to placement arrangements
- Any absences between the placement start and end dates, whether through sick leave or approved annual leave
- Name and contact details of the Placement Tutor

6.5 Students are required to inform the Placements and Student Visa teams of any changes immediately.

7. OVERSEAS PLACEMENTS

7.1 St Mary's University recognises that work placements undertaken outside of the UK may carry a higher level of inherent risk due to variations in national legislation, employment regulations, cultural norms, political stability and locally available protections. As part of the University's duty of care, additional safeguards apply to all international placements, whether year-long or integrated.

7.2 Students may complete placements overseas, if deemed aligned to compliance and University policies.

7.3 Student visa holders may complete placements overseas while remaining sponsored by the University, provided they comply with all attendance monitoring and reporting requirements. The placement must also be approved by the UKVI Compliance and Immigration Manager.

7.4 When reviewing an overseas placement, the University and student must consider the following:

- Any form of legislation, employment law and regulatory frameworks applicable in the host country
- Local, regional or national risk factors including security, public health, infrastructure and environmental risks
- Any risk factors that may be associated with the type of activity, workplace or location, in accordance with the University's risk assessment procedures
- Proportionate due diligence is conducted, and all known risks and expectations are communicated and approved
- UKVI obligations are met, where applicable
- Travel and accommodation costs

7.5 St Mary's University reserves the right to refuse an overseas placement request that does not meet its compliance and/or regulatory requirements or poses a risk to the University, programme or student.

7.6 Where an overseas placement has been considered, students are required to provide evidence of the following documents before final approval:

- Travel insurance
- Personal accident insurance
- Professional liability insurance
- Medical cover
- Visa/Work permit (if required)

8. DURATION OF PLACEMENT

8.1 Placements may range from short integrated placements to extended blocks, provided they meet the recommended hours or weeks, required to achieve set learning outcomes. Learning outcomes for any form of placement must be detailed and outline within the relevant Programme Specifications or Handbook.

8.2 Year-long placements must be completed in a minimum period of 44-weeks, within one academic calendar year.

8.3 The University will only approve and support placement opportunities for sponsored students holding a student visa, where the structure, duration and attendance requirements comply with the Home Office regulations and enable the University to continue visa sponsorship with confidence.

8.4 International students must only apply for and undertake a year-long placement that requires engagement and attendance for the majority of the academic year.

8.5 Any placement that results in extended periods without structured, supervised, academic or placement-related activity, will not be approved by the University.

8.6 Year-long placements must be designed and delivered in a way that ensures there is no period of inactivity exceeding 60 consecutive days.

8.7 Additional duration may be determined by the programme requirements and module specifications.

8.8 The University has a statutory obligation to report all UK-based student placements up to 20 days or more. This requirement applies to all placements regardless of credits or link to learning outcomes, with the exception of clinical placements, teacher training placements, and work-based placements undertaken as part of an apprenticeship.

9. DURING THE PLACEMENT

9.1 The University must continue to monitor and record students' attendance and engagement during a placement, including those based overseas.

9.2 Students and allocated Placement Tutors are required to collaboratively evidence a student's engagement and development, throughout the duration of their placement period.

9.3 Student visa holders are responsible for keeping their term-time and placement address updated with the University throughout their year-long placement, and respond promptly to UKVI compliance checks

9.4 Failure by student visa holders to keep their term-time and placement address details up to date with the University may result in the University being unable to meet its sponsorship obligations, with implications for the student's immigration status

9.5 The Placements Office must ensure that students remain actively engaged throughout the placement period and that this engagement can be evidenced if required for compliance or audit purposes. This includes:

- Maintaining regular contact with students whilst on placement
- Undertaking documented engagement checks at defined intervals
- Escalating concerns promptly where engagement cannot be confirmed

9.6 For students undertaking year-long placements, engagement checks must be conducted no less frequently than every 6-8 weeks.

9.7 Placement Tutors are expected to provide structured support to students, with at least six points of academic contact during the placement period, in the form of feedback and/or meetings.

9.7.1 Feedback meetings should include academic review of progress and alignment with learning outcomes.

9.7.2 At least two meetings must include the Placement Provider, ensuring the following:

- Placement learning outcomes are being met
- Workplace expectations and conduct standards are adhered to
- Satisfactory attendance is maintained and evidenced

9.8 Any pastoral needs identified by the Placements Office or Placement Tutor during the placement must be communicated to the relevant Wellbeing or Professional services team promptly, ensuring appropriate support can be provided.

9.9 Failure to comply with any workplace expectations by the Placement Provider or attendance requirements may result in early termination from the placement.

9.10 Student visa holders who fail to comply with additional UKVI compliance requirements may jeopardise both placement eligibility and visa status. The University is obliged to report any changes to the Home Office and is authorised to revoke sponsorship at any time.

10. CHANGES TO PLACEMENT STATUS

10.1 Students may request to add or remove a year-long placement from their Undergraduate programme. This will need to be requested through the same process as a Course Change request.

10.2 Approval for the addition or removal of a year-long placement will be determined by Registry Services, in collaboration with the relevant Programme Team.

10.3 Student visa holders may be required to request a new CAS and/or visa extension, with additional approval from the UKVI Compliance and Immigration Manager.

11. PLACEMENT NON-COMPLETION AND DISRUPTION

11.1 Students not able to successfully confirm a year-long placement by the deadline, will be transferred onto the non-placement version of the degree programme.

11.2 Student visa holders not able to successfully confirm a year-long placement will be reported to UKVI who may curtail the student's visa, to reflect an earlier completion date. A visa curtailment will not lead to any claim for refund of the Immigration Health Surcharge paid in the original visa application.

11.3 Student visa holders not able to successfully confirm a year-long placement, will not be permitted to use the additional time to work full-time or start another programme.

11.4 Students who are unable to complete a placement due to an approved Leave of Absence or similar interruption, may not be permitted to retake a placement module or year-long placement in a subsequent academic year. Any consideration of a repeat attempt will be subject to the student's remaining registration period and applicable fee implications. For international students, visa restrictions and sponsorship requirements will also apply and may limit the availability of this option.

11.5 Students who do not complete, or end, a year-long placement earlier than the confirmed placement end date or are terminated from a year-long placement, will not usually be permitted to return to study within the same academic year. MBBS students should refer to the relevant handbook.

11.6 Other circumstances that may result in the disruption or non-completion of a placement may include but are not limited to:

- The Placement Provider becoming unavailable or withdrawing from the placement agreement
- A dispute arising between the student and the Placement Provider
- The requirement for the student to undertake additional academic study
- The unavailability of required modules upon the student's return from a placement period

11.7 Students affected by placement disruption should contact their Programme team and Registry Services as early as possible, to discuss available options and any academic or visa implications.

12. COMPLETION OF PLACEMENT

12.1 Placement learning outcomes are to be assessed in accordance with the programme specification, module assessment criteria and guidance from the Programme Team or Placement Tutor.

12.2 Learning outcomes from the completed placement should be measured through a reflective assessment (e.g. reflective journal, portfolio, written reflection, etc), as outlined in the programme and module specifications, in addition to the verification of satisfactory attendance and engagement.

12.3 Students successfully completing the placement and associated assessments will progress to completion of the degree, with the placement recorded or reflected in the degree title, where applicable.

12.4 Students unable to meet the requirements to successfully complete the placement and associated assessments will be transferred onto the non-placement version of the degree.

12.5 The outcome of the placement must be provided to Registry Services by 31st July.

13. RETURNING FROM A PLACEMENT

13.1 The Placement Tutor, Course Lead, and Programme Team must make appropriate provisions to support students' transition back into full academic study at St Mary's.

13.2 Students should be provided with the relevant academic support to reorient back to university-based learning, delivery, and expectations.

13.3 It is a student's responsibility to ensure all financial obligations have been met for their return to on-campus study.

13.4 Students must ensure to register onto any subsequent modules or academic year following return from a placement period, including any enrolment requirements. Any queries should be raised with Registry Services.

14. FEES AND FUNDING

14.1 Students undertaking a year-long placement or a work-based placement module remain registered students of St Mary's University and are therefore liable for tuition fees, at the rate set for the placement provision of that academic year.

14.2 Funding arrangements vary for Home and International student. Details of funding arrangements should be raised with the Fees Office.

14.3 Home students with funding through Student Finance England (SFE) will have tuition fees for the placement year reduced, as per the sector benchmark for that academic year. Students are encouraged to seek further information and confirmation directly with SFE or any relevant funding body.

14.4 International students will pay tuition fees at the international placement year rate, set annually by the University. Students should refer to the fee regulations for that current academic year and seek confirmation from the Fees Office.

14.5 Students with declared dependants or other maintenance support funds should seek guidance from the relevant agencies on their eligibility to receive these during the year-long placement.

14.6 Students who withdraw or are terminated from their placement before the confirmed end date will have their fee status reviewed by the Fees office and should refer to the Refund Policy for further information.