

# **Volunteering & Employability**

## **Health and safety guidance notes for students going on a placement**

### **Introduction**

It is the responsibility of your placement organisation to protect the health, safety and welfare of its volunteers. Your placement organisation should also provide you with relevant training necessary for you to undertake your specific volunteering activities.

Placements provide an opportunity for you to apply skills acquired whilst at your institution to 'real-life' situations. Many qualities can also be learned and developed during a placement that could improve your employment prospects. However, there are health and safety aspects to every placement, namely: -

- being under the supervision of a third party;
- being involved with, or undertaking, activities where you have little or no experience; and
- working in and visiting environments and locations that you are unfamiliar with.

This guidance provides you with an awareness of the health and safety aspects of placements.

### **Health and Safety Responsibilities**

(a) Placement Providers – organisations providing placements

- A general duty to ensure your health and safety whilst on placement.
- Take account of your potential inexperience for activities you'll be expected to undertake and put into place appropriate controls.
- Provide you with information, instruction, training and supervision.

(b) Students

- Not to do anything that puts your or other people's health and safety at risk.
- Follow health and safety instructions, information and training.
- Never intentionally misuse anything provided for health and safety reasons.
- Bring any health and safety concerns to the attention of your placement provider and your placement tutor at the university.

### **Placement Preparation**

There are many aspects to placements that you have to prepare for, health and safety included. It is important that you: -

- attend briefings prior to placements commencing as health and safety will be covered; and

- familiarise yourself with the health and safety aspects of placements, particularly you and your placement provider's responsibilities, and what you should receive, particularly in the initial period.

### **Information, Instruction, Training and Supervision**

These form the 'backbone' of ensuring your health and safety whilst on placement and can include: classroom-type situations; health and safety notices and signs; safe working procedures. As soon as possible after commencing a placement you must receive a health and safety induction. If you do not receive an induction then raise this with your placement provider.

As your placement progresses so will the information, instruction and training you receive. Never undertake an activity or go into an area unless you have received appropriate information, instruction and training for you to feel competent and confident to carry on.

Levels of supervision will vary from placement -to-placement and at points within a particular placement. Don't be afraid to ask questions of your supervisor and if you feel there is a lack of supervision then raise this concern.

### **Emergency Information**

Whilst on placement it is essential that you receive information and instruction on what action to take should an emergency situation arise. Such situations include: -

- hearing the fire alarm;
- discovering a fire;
- requiring first aid assistance;
- threat to personal safety; and
- spillage of a dangerous substance.

If you are not made aware of what correct actions to take raise this with your placement provider. Such information must be given at the induction stage and where a change of work location or activity occurs.

### **Assessing and Controlling Risks**

Your placement provider is expected to determine the risks encountered with the activities you'll be involved with and put into place measures to control these risks. Such measures may be no different to those already in place for any of their employees. However, because of your potential inexperience, or other factors, a higher level of measure may be required, especially in the early periods of the placement.

Measures to control risks can include: -

- providing information, instruction, training and supervision;
- having in place guarding, ventilation systems etc. to control risks at source;
- ensuring equipment used is appropriate and in safe condition; and

- providing, and ensuring the use of, personal protective equipment and clothing.

It is important that you are made aware of the risks associated with the activities you will be involved with and what is in place and required of you to control these.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

An element of controlling risks may be the use or wearing of PPE. PPE encompasses goggles, hard hats, ear defenders, face masks, overalls, gloves, waterproof clothing etc.

If you are issued with PPE it is important you are made aware of: -

- the reason it's required;
- how to ensure a proper fit so it will work effectively;
- how to maintain, store, recognize defects and action to take, and obtain replacements;

If you believe an item of PPE is defective do not continue to use it.

### **Reporting Incidents and Health and Safety Concerns**

It is important that you report incidents – whether injury has resulted or not – that you are involved in. This will enable your placement provider to investigate the circumstances and take any necessary action. Reporting a 'near miss' incident could ensure that nobody is injured next time. At induction you must be made aware of the reporting procedures.

If you do have any health and safety concerns during your placement the first action is to raise these with your placement provider i.e. injury, training, pregnancy. Where you believe these concerns are serious also make your placement tutor aware. Don't wait to the next scheduled visit or conversation. Never undertake an activity, using equipment or go into an area unless you are competent and confident to do so.

### **Monitoring and Feedback**

You are an essential element in the monitoring of health and safety performance of your placement provider. Ensure you discuss health and safety aspects with your placement tutor and complete any necessary paperwork that is required of you.

At the end of your placement give thoughts on how you feel the placement provider approached health and safety.

The information is very useful to the university as a means of reviewing the health and safety performance of the placement provider.

*(The following information is to be included where this guidance is being given to those students who are undertaking EU and international placements)*

## **EU & International Placements**

Whilst types of work and activities undertaken during overseas placements may vary from country-to-country there are also other aspects that can have potential health and safety implications.

These include: -

- different climatic conditions (higher temperatures, more extreme winters);
- cultural and language differences (accepted practices, local laws and religions, communication more difficult);
- unfamiliarity with, and little knowledge of, placement locations and surrounding areas (personal safety, no-go areas, areas of high crime, safe use of transport);
- long-haul travel (jet-lag, difference in local hours, affect on body – initially more fatigued); and
- contracting illnesses, receiving injuries and obtaining medical treatment (venomous animals, contagious diseases, vaccinations, contaminated drinking water, local health care arrangements, contacting emergency services).

These will also affect you during your own time whilst on placement.

It is important that prior to undertaking any EU or international placement you discuss the necessary arrangements that need to be in place and what you require to do in preparation.

If you have any queries or questions regarding these guidance notes please contact us at [volunteering.su@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:volunteering.su@coventry.ac.uk)