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**BA (Hons) PR & Marketing Communications**

## I4168 Professional Communication Placement (40 credits)

### PLACEMENT GUIDE: FOR STUDENTS



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**Contents**

**1 General Information**

**2 What happens when you are on Placement?**

**3 Role of the University**

**4 Host Organisations**

**5 Assessment**

**6 Key Contacts**

**1. General Information**

**Purpose of the Placement**

The aim of the placement is to provide you with practical experience relevant to your programme. It will give you the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills gained on the course and also to extend and develop these. Having the chance to observe and participate in communication related work in an organisation may also provide you with a topic for your honours dissertation and possibly, a relevant career choice.

**Timing**

Students may undertake the placement anytime from the end of April 2022 to March 2023. If the placement is during term time, it must be scheduled around any teaching sessions for other modules. Students may work remotely for their host or be office-based or a blend of the two. The placement can either run on a 1-2 days per week or in a block to coincide with student vacations. Ultimately, the timing of each placement will be a mutual decision made by the host and student.

**2. What happens when you are on Placement?**

**Host Contact**

We ask host organisations to appoint a key contact for you for the duration of the placement. This is someone for you to discuss issues, concerns, workloads or responsibilities with. Any problems on placement, which cannot be resolved by the host organisation, should be referred, as soon as possible, to Ann Turner, Placement Coordinator (see contact details below).

**It is important to set up a meeting with your contact person in the organisation before or at the beginning of the placement to discuss a programme of activities and set agreed objectives**. You need to be enthusiastic and willing to take on tasks and challenges and completing them to the best of your ability. If you are not clear about what is required of you – **ASK**. If you prove your worth they are more likely to give you more responsibility. Be **proactive and organised** and have a clear set of objectives before you join your host, but also **be ready to be flexible, adaptable and dependable.**  Be clear about what you can offer and areas you want to gain experience in. **Effort in = reward out.**

**The importance of punctuality, attentiveness and willingness to help cannot be stressed strongly enough**. You are encouraged to take the opportunity to gain experience, to make a good impression and to enjoy your placement.

**Agreeing objectives**

Your objectives for the placement **should be agreed** between you and the host organisation before your placement begins. During your first meeting with your contact person, discuss your host’s requirements and expectations and discuss your skills, experience and expectations. These should inform the development of clear objectives and deliverables which **you and your host agree and sign off.** To gain a broad experience try to negotiate that you work with a number of staff across various projects.

Take every opportunity to put into practice some of the knowledge you have attained on the course as well as developing new practical vocational knowledge and competencies.

**Work Programme**

We recommend to hosts that they draw up a timetable of activities for you. We do, however, stress to them that we, and our students, appreciate the need for a flexible and adaptable approach. They are also aware that QMU is happy to discuss a suitable programme of activities with the host organisation if appropriate.

Placement work can take a number of forms. You may be asked to cover a role while the member of staff is on leave. You may be given a specific project to complete. Alternatively you may be asked to help out on a range of projects or activities. You may also job shadow.

Your placement may involve time spent shadowing individuals in the host organisation, attending virtual meetings. You may be required to do some administrative tasks, but also need to ask if you can write releases, ‘sell stories’ to journalists, create content for various platforms, build a digital presence online, help organise events etc. **Be proactive and ask for tasks, volunteer for things, offer help to other employees who have a heavy workload.**

**Placement Portfolio**

Your placement provides an excellent opportunity to practice professional skills e.g. creating content etc and copies of all your work should be retained to go into your e-portfolio that will assist you at interviews for jobs after graduation.

**Please note however that you must have permission to take any copies or originals from host organisations – even if it is all your own work - as it remains the property of the host and could be competitor sensitive or confidential.**

**Standards and Resources**

We ask the host organisation to clarify issues of confidentiality, dress code, working hours, sickness procedures etc with you in advance of you joining them, either during a meeting or via e-mail or letter.

If you are working in their office, we also ask for you to be allocated your own dedicated workspace but you may be working remotely and will need to have a pc/laptop and internet connection to communicate with your host and clients.

We ask your host to provide a key contact who is there to mentor and supervise you during the internship. If you have any concerns about the work talk to them.

**If you are unsure at any time about what is being asked of you or what a task involves seek help immediately – ask for clarification – sometimes the staff you are working with may assume you know what they know or they might be inexperienced at briefing another person. So before going ahead and hoping it is what is needed – just ask to be sure. You will feel much more confident about the work you are doing.**

**Financial Arrangement**

You will join a host organisation for a placement period. No payment is expected from the host during the 150 hours. We do urge hosts to pay reasonable expenses to students on unpaid placements that are a core programme requirement.

If you and your host organisation agree that you will work for more than 150 hours, you should be remunerated for the extra time. You and your host organisation should negotiate the remuneration independently of QMU and payment should be in line with government and professional requirements. <https://www.gov.uk/employment-rights-for-interns>

CIPR internship guidance

<https://cipr.co.uk/CIPR/Our_work/Policy/Internship_and_Work_Placement_toolkit.aspx?WebsiteKey=0379ffac-bc76-433c-9a94-56a04331bf64>

PRCA internship Guidelines:

[**http://www.prca.org.uk/campaigns/better-internships**](http://www.prca.org.uk/campaigns/better-internships)

Contracts for this additional work should be negotiated independently of QMU, between student and employer. Please note QMU insurance does not cover these extended working hours.

**Insurance of Students on Placement**

Students on placement are fully covered by QMU’s liability insurance. If you negotiate any additional hours with the host, you need to ensure you are covered by their insurance policy. If you are undertaking a placement abroad, then we advise you to take out relevant insurance such as travel or medical insurance.

**Health & Safety**

Students on placement will be expected to adhere to the host organisation’s health and safety procedures. Your host is required to complete a Placement Indemnity form in advance of your placement commencing. Please check that they have done this and returned it to PPSO@qmu.ac.uk

**Complaints Handling Procedure**

The vast majority of placements run smoothly and they are rewarding experiences for students and hosts. If an issue arises the student should talk to their key contact at the organisation.If the problem is ongoing then contact the module coordinator, Ann Turner. If you have a complaint that remains unresolved there is a University Complaints Handling Procedure which can be found here: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/media/4066/qmu-complaints-procedure.pdf>

The Procedure has three stages: frontline resolution, investigation and external review. If a student has a complaint, they should discuss this with someone in the area which the student wishes to complain about (for example, for a complaint relating to speech and hearing sciences, this should be discussed with the Programme Leader or Module Coordinator for the module concerned). The complaint will be considered under frontline resolution (unless complex) and a response will usually be given within 5 working days. If the complaint is complicated, it is the student’s choice to take it to investigation stage immediately or it may be referred to the investigation stage by the person the student determined to discuss the complaint with at frontline resolution. Should the complaint be considered under the investigation stage, a response will normally be received within 20 working days.

Any queries about the complaints procedure or any complaints written on the Complaints Form may be emailed to complaints@qmu.ac.uk

**Social Media and Confidentiality**

**Please remember that you must respect the confidentiality of your employer and their policy on use of social media.** Companies can and will monitor employee use of social media and social networking web sites, even if they are engaging in social networking or social media use away from the office. Please also remember you are representing the University when you are on placement. Your attitudes and behaviour are seen as a reflection of the values we instil via your programme. We require you to be ambassadors and your positive reputation enhances our reputation. We expect you to be professional at all times and abide by the industry codes of conduct as detailed on the CIPR and PRCA websites.

**3. Role of the University**

It is **your responsibility** to secure a placement to meet the requirements of the course and it is your responsibility to arrange a suitable time around your course commitments to attend 150 hours with a placement host. This year the speed interviews will be online and students will forward their CVs to the module coordinator in advance of the event. If hosts are unable to attend CVs will be batched and forwarded to the organisations.

Once a student has secured an offer of a placement you should seek approval from the Placement Coordinator, Ann Turner, **immediately**. If the host is appropriate, we will ask the student to complete the **online student record form** which is available on the QMU website. In the search box type PBL or click the link here <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/current-students/practice-based-learning/student-placement-record/>

The details you include on this form about your host will enable our Pre-Placement Support Officer to contact them and ask them to complete a placement indemnity form. This form must be signed before the start of your placement. If we do not think your host is appropriate we will advise you to find an alternative.

***While we can provide a limited amount of support the onus to secure your placement lies firmly with you.***

**4. Hosts**

Hosts vary from year to year and include PR and marketing consultancies and in-house communications and marketing departments. Organisations participating in our placement scheme come from the private, public and voluntary sectors. In the past companies such as the Scottish Government, the Fashion House Group, Dobbies, the Big Partnership, Grayling, Holyrood Partnership and charities such as Children First, Amnesty International and Capability Scotland have hosted QMU students.

Ensure that you give due consideration to the type of host employer that you would like to undergo your placement with.

**5. Assessment**

Students complete an assessment around their placement. **You should keep a diary** recording your experiences so you can reflect in and on practice. You will produce an e-portfolio suitable for a job interview as part of the assessment for this module. This will illustrate a range of skills appropriate to your degree programme and illustrate your professional competencies. **Students must seek clearance from hosts to take any copies of any work undertaken when on placement for use in their portfolio.** Hosts should be clear with students about any material that is competitor sensitive or confidential.

You can download a copy of the assignment specification from the assessment folder on The Hub.

**5. Completion of Paperwork**

***ACTION REQUIRED:***

***As soon as a placement is secured complete and submit the electronic online placement form available here*** [***https://www.qmu.ac.uk/current-students/practice-based-learning/student-placement-record/***](https://www.qmu.ac.uk/current-students/practice-based-learning/student-placement-record/)

***The pre-placement support officer requires this information up to 4 weeks in advance of starting your placement.***

**PPSO will contact your host and ask them to complete an indemnity form. Only once we have received all this documentation are you able to start your placement. Please note that at present students are not advised by the PPSO that all relevant paperwork is in place**

**6. Contacts for Further Information**

Ann Turner

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