

ROYAL HOLLOWAY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

WORK EXPERIENCE/EMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

(Version 2)

The College is committed to the principle of introducing young people to the world of work and recognises this as an important part of their education. In providing a child or young person (definitions of these terms are given below) with a work experience placement, or employment, it has similar responsibilities for their health, safety and welfare as for any employee. However, for the reasons identified in this document it is required to apply these responsibilities to a greater degree than would normally be the case.

This Policy and Procedure identifies the issues to be taken into consideration before and during the engagement of children and young persons, including the need, in all cases, to conduct a risk assessment and to implement any control measures identified to be necessary from that process prior to their joining the College. For the purposes of this document a child is:

- anyone who has not yet reached the official age at which they may leave school, being just before, or just after, their 16th birthday (this is often referred to as the minimum school leaving age (MSLA) and who attends the College as a work experience trainee.

A young person is:

- anyone who is under 18 years of age but who is not in College employment e.g. a work experience trainee

or

- anyone who is under 18 years of age and is employed under a contract of employment with the College

Health and safety law places an obligation on the College to ensure that children and young persons are protected from undue risks to their health and safety. These may, for example, arise from their lack of experience, absence of awareness of existing or potential harm, or the fact that they may not yet have fully matured. No child or young person may, therefore, be engaged for work experience or employment which:

- a) is beyond his/her physical or psychological capacity;
- b) involves harmful exposure to certain agents, particularly those which are toxic or cause cancer;
- c) involves potentially harmful exposure to radiation;
- d) involves a risk of accident particularly likely to affect the inexperienced;
- e) presents a risk to health from extreme cold, heat, noise or vibration;
- f) involves the sale or supply of alcohol.

The only exception to the above may be a young person (but not a child) for whom the work undertaken is necessary for his/her training e.g. where they are undertaking an apprenticeship. In such cases they must be supervised by a competent person and any risk(s) identified from the risk assessment process which have the potential to cause harm, must be reduced to the lowest level 'reasonably practicable'.

Section 1 – Assessing the Risks Associated with Work Experience Placements

The principles and practice of risk assessment are firmly established within the College and the methodology is defined in its formal document: *Guide to Conducting 'General' Risk Assessments*. Before a child or young person commences duties a risk assessment must be undertaken to identify the potential hazards that may exist and the measures required for their control, together with the manner in which they are required to conduct themselves in order to ensure their safety. Risk assessments must, therefore, be undertaken before they commence duties and School Work Experience Organisers will ask for copies of these in advance of placements taking place.

In undertaking risk assessments it will be necessary to take into account the issues identified in Section 1 a) – f) above and:

- a) the fact that children and young persons are likely to be inexperienced, unaware of health and safety risks and physically or mentally immature;
- b) put in place measures to control the risks which will either remove them altogether or reduce them to the lowest level reasonably practicable;
- c) let the school representatives or parents/guardians of any children below minimum school leaving age know the key findings of the risk assessment and the control measures taken before work experience commences; and
- d) keep a record of the risk assessment.

It may be possible to use or adapt a generic risk assessment for those undertaking the same activity or work experience project as previously undertaken. However, in all cases it will be necessary to:

- cover all relevant issues identified in this Policy
- keep the risk assessment up to date and review the hazards and their risks if there is reason to believe that the original risk assessment is no longer applicable
- bear in mind any information about the child or young person's needs which are passed on by the work experience organiser, the school or parents

General points to be considered in risk assessments

Managers must look at the workplace from the child or young person's perspective and consider what dangers they will tend to recognise and those it is likely they will not. They will need to look at:

- how the workplace in which they will work is fitted and laid out
- what type of equipment will be used and how it will be handled
- how the work is organised
- the need to assess and provide health and safety training (see Section 2 below)
- the nature of any physical, biological and chemical agents they may be exposed to, for how long and to what extent; and

- the risks from certain work hazards and any work they cannot undertake because of their age.

Note:

- (i) A child or young person must not undertake activities where it is found that a significant risk remains, even though all reasonable steps to control it have been taken.
- (ii) The consumption of alcohol on either College or Student Union premises is strictly prohibited and engagement is conditional upon the child or young person signing a copy of the College and Students' Union, *Under 18's Policy* and meeting with a licensed representative of each body.

Section 2 – Training and Supervision

Children and young persons need training most when they start employment or work experience. They need to be trained to do the work without putting themselves or others at risk.

It is important that checks are made to ensure they have understood their training including, for example:

- the hazards and risks in the workplace
- the control measures put in place to protect their health and safety
- a basic introduction to health and safety, for example first-aid, fire and evacuation procedures

Children and young people are unlikely to be familiar with the risks arising from the tasks they will undertake and from their surroundings and will, therefore, require more supervision than adults. Effective supervision will also help managers to gain a clear idea of their progress and to monitor the effectiveness of their training.

Employee or trade union health and safety representatives can play a valuable role early on, for example, by:

- introducing the child or young person to the workplace
- helping with their ongoing training and
- giving feedback about particular concerns, especially as the child or young person may not feel confident to speak to their line manager/supervisor directly

Section 3 – A Visit from the School Work Experience Organiser

When a work experience placement organiser visits, managers should be aware that they will be looking for confirmation that adequate attention has been paid to health, safety and welfare issues. The following should already have been taken into account in the risk assessment but are, nevertheless, an indication of the issues the Organiser will consider:

- housekeeping
- lighting
- seating
- machine guarding

- fire precautions
- electrical wiring and electrical safety
- toilets and washing facilities
- provision of personal protective equipment
- noise

The school work experience organiser may ask the manager to sign a written agreement which can be especially helpful in clarifying the responsibilities of both sides. This may be combined with consent from the parent/guardian of the young person to undertake the placement and they may ask to see the risk assessment and control measures identified to be necessary. At the same time, managers may seek clarification on issues associated with the young person which may have an impact of their suitability for employment/work experience.

For this meeting, the manager should produce:

- a plan of work for the work/placement
- arrangements for instruction and training before the work/placement commences and
- how the child or young person will be supervised and who will be responsible for this supervision

Section 4 – The Role of the Health & Safety Adviser

Prior to any child or young person commencing duties at the College the manager must liaise with the Health & Safety Adviser or Deputy Health & Safety Adviser, agreeing the risk assessments and management controls identified to be necessary and which will be in place.

Section 5 – Monitoring compliance with the requirements of this Policy

Each department's compliance with the requirements of this Policy will be reviewed by a member of the College Health and Safety Office during the health and safety audit process.

This Policy forms part of the College's Health and Safety Policy.

The information contained in this document is drawn extensively from the Health and Safety Executive publication *'The Right Start – Work experience for young people: Health and safety basics for employers'*, which can be found on the Health and Safety Office WebPages.

Dr Richard Fisk
 Health & Safety Adviser
 Version 2
 20/06/2011

Signed by the Principal, Professor Paul Layzell on 23rd June 2011.

In accordance with the College's commitment to equality and diversity, this Policy has been written and screened to avoid discrimination and promote a positive approach to race, disability and gender issues. Comments on the content of this document should be directed to the College Health & Safety Adviser.