

Positive Placements – Tutors' Guide

How this book can help you

Positive Placements has been written for students preparing for a placement, whether this is a traditional school placement, an alternative placement or an international placement. Our intention has been to use case studies from students who have had successful placements to inspire, encourage and help students who are understandably anxious about what might be ahead of them. We have tried to cover a broad range of issues and illustrate some of the excitement and challenges that students may face on placement.

At first glance, it may seem therefore, that this book is not of great use to tutors. However, after each case study, we have included questions to encourage students to think through the issues that have been raised. These questions are suitable for students to consider on their own, but they also could form the basis for useful discussion within or preparation for 'professional studies' seminars.

There are key topics that occur in several places throughout the book but the following list indicates where key topics are focused:

- Planning and Preparation: Chapter 3 and Chapter 6
- Curriculum: Chapter 6
- Differentiation: Chapter 7
- Assessment: Chapter 6
- Behaviour Management: Chapter 6
- Resources: Chapter 6
- Presentation of Self: Chapter 5
- Relationships with children & other adults: Chapter 5
- Child Protection: Chapter 7
- Bereavement: Chapter 7

Chapter 8 is for students having difficulty on placement and provides advice and guidance to support them and to help them to try to improve their performance. We hope that the suggestions may be useful when you are working with and supporting students facing a number of challenges.

A significant element of the book and website are the Case Studies, which have inspired and motivated students and tutors, and we hope that you will find them equally inspiring.

Placements

Throughout the book, we have described placements in three ways. Firstly, there are traditional school placements; then placements in settings other than schools which we have called ‘alternative’ placements; and ‘international’ placements. We do not intend or attempt to provide guidance about organizing traditional placements as every training provider has considerable experience and expertise in this. However, ‘alternative’ placements are fairly new to many training providers, so we will share some advice and suggestions based on our experiences. We will also offer advice and suggestions based on our experience of ‘international’ placements. If you are an experienced tutor you may find some of the suggestions are just common sense, and ones you already use. We hope that particular elements and ideas will be useful to you, and to less experienced colleagues who are beginning to get involved in organizing and supporting placements, and working with students before, during and after their placements.

Alternative placements

Alternative placements open up a wide variety of opportunities to students that they could not experience within a normal classroom setting:

- To work with other professionals and to develop professional relationships.
- To experience how teaching and learning can be, and needs to be, different outside the classroom.
- To be more creative in planning lessons.
- To develop new skills and strategies for managing behaviour.
- To become familiar with a variety of resources.
- To observe children’s learning in a different environment and to reflect on the implications for the classroom.

This is certainly not an exhaustive list of opportunities and in our experience the feedback from students is almost always positive.

Finding a placement

Many providers expect students to find their own alternative placements. However, it is essential that that tutors have a clear understanding of what is expected from a placement so that they can advise students about suitability. Students will also ask for help in finding suitable placements. This type of placement may not be formally assessed, so if students

wish that to live at home during the placement, which may be a distance from where the provider is situated, this may be possible. This may make it impossible for tutors to visit or to have a comprehensive knowledge of all possible placement settings. However we have included on this website an illustrative list of potential placements which may be appropriate for alternative placements, acknowledging that the possibilities are vast.

Ideally, students need to think through carefully what kind of placement they wish to undertake. For some, it may be an ideal opportunity to develop an interest further. For example, students with an interest in PE might want to carry out their placement at an outdoor sports centre. Others may wish to learn something completely new. If that is the case they need to have some idea of what it is they want to learn because different placements can help various areas of knowledge, understanding, skills and professional development. Wildlife parks, farm centres, and zoos are useful places to learn more about science, geography and the environment, whereas museums are excellent for learning more about history, art and drama.

Issues to consider

Although alternative placements present students with many opportunities, there may be some students who do not make the most of these, for a variety of reasons. For example, students may leave it to the very last minute to try and find a placement. Consequently, they have not thought through what they want to do and often end up with a placement they would not particularly have chosen. It is important to set deadlines, so students have to tell you where they are carrying out their placement in plenty of time. It is also useful to ask the students to complete a form which not only tells you where they will be carrying out their placement, but also asks them to set out what they are hoping to learn from the placement and how this should help them to become a more informed and more effective teacher.

As this sort of placement may not be formally assessed, a minority of students could perceive it as an opportunity to do as little as possible. This is not easily addressed without creating a lot more work for you. It may well be best to concentrate on all the positive aspects of the placement, share these with the students and allow them to make the most of the opportunity. The majority of students will undoubtedly work hard and benefit greatly from the placement- as the Case Studies illustrate. If the placement is linked to a written or verbal report that students have to present, this may encourage them to take it more seriously; but this may detract from the enjoyment of the experience. The formality or informality of any assessed element of the placement will necessarily depend on the individual institution, programme and validation document.

International placements

There are many international opportunities and it will depend on where you work as to which ones you are involved with. First, there are fully funded placements which are organized on some forms of recognized programme. The Erasmus programme, which is EU funded, facilitates the opportunity to study abroad, and this is normally for a term. Usually, within that term there will be the opportunity to do a placement in an educational setting.

Another part of the EU lifelong learning programme is The Leonardo programme. 'The Leonardo programme supports the development of skills and training. It funds work placements for trainees, workers and staff, and supports European projects to discuss common issues or develop training materials, courses and frameworks.' www.leonardo.org.uk/

The Leonardo programme enables students to be undertake funded teaching placements abroad. These are organized by the training provider. To be part of this project, you will need to have European partners who will provide the placements.

Another type of funded placement is for students studying modern foreign languages as a specialist subject, where a foreign teaching placement is a mandatory part of their course.

Second, there can be a wide range of non-funded opportunities to do placements abroad. This will depend on you and your institution. You may have links with training providers abroad who are willing to host your students or you may be willing to encourage your students to find their own placements if they wish to. In our experience there are many benefits for students undertaking international placements. They enable students to:

- Gain experience of international settings and the wider context of educational provision.
- Gain experience of preparation for learning and teaching in an international context.
- Extend knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to learning and teaching and discover new resources
- Critically analyse practical and pedagogical issues encountered in learning and teaching in an international context.
- Experience a new culture including language, customs, beliefs, lifestyle and professional practice.
- Develop confidence and independence.

Issues to consider

If the programme you work on does not have any opportunity for international placements it is worth considering introducing one. It is a useful way of marketing your

programme. This is not a simple process, however, and needs to be considered when planning the programme as a whole.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc80_en.htm is an informative website, and will help develop understanding of the Erasmus programme and <http://www.leonardo.org.uk/> will explain all you need to know about the Leonardo project.

In Chapter 3 of *Positive Placements* we have provided advice for students with regard to the preparation needed for International placements. The following is a summary of the issues that as a tutor you may wish to focus on:

Risk assessments – Are you satisfied that the placement destination is safe? Check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and specific Embassy guidance and recommendations and read up to date reports if you are in any doubt. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office website provides guidance on travel, and living abroad, for a significant number of countries. It also has updated travel news, passport and visa advice and entry requirements. The website also provides information on ‘Staying safe and healthy’, which includes a travel checklist; travel health; travel insurance advice; driving abroad; travel money; eat and drink safely; tropical cyclones; terrorism; river and sea safety including piracy; and when things go wrong.

Foreign and Commonwealth office

www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/

Travel Insurance – You need to ensure that students take out appropriate travel insurance. They may assume that as they are going on a placement they will somehow be covered by the training provider’s insurance but they must take out their own. Applying for The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) would also be useful. The Card gives rights to healthcare during a temporary visit to European Economic Area (EEA) countries or Switzerland. People, aged 16 or over, who are normally resident in the UK can apply for an EHIC. The Department of Health website: www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/Healthcare-abroad/pages/Healthcareabroad.aspx includes details of medical health care abroad including medical health care insurance, which students should arrange and take out before travel, in addition to the EHIC.

It is advisable to ask students to sign a disclaimer confirming that they accept responsibility for taking out travel insurance and confirming they have done so.

Travel

Students will almost certainly ask you about their travel arrangements. It is their responsibility to make arrangements but you should advise them to be careful about the

extra costs that airlines often add. Chapter 3 gives more advice about this and also about luggage restrictions.

Cultural preparation

If students are going to get the most out of an international placement they need some cultural preparation before they set off. Under the Leonardo scheme you will be required to provide cultural preparation. If you are based in a University there may be International students who can help with this. Students who have previously done a similar placement are also a very good source of advice and support.

We hope that this brief guide will be useful to you in considering the many issues involved in supporting placements, and students undertaking placements. The Positive Placements book contains far more detail than we have included here, and although written for students it contains information that you may find useful as you organize, manage, monitor and implement placements in educational settings, and/or support students undertaking placements. We anticipate that the motivation, enthusiasm, commitment and creativity shown in the Case Studies, will be demonstrated by your own students; and that you will be as inspired as we have been, and continue to be.