**University College Cork**

**Student Placement Risk Assessment Guide**

**Version 1.00**

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# Table of Contents

[Table of Contents 2](#_Toc480979919)

[Background 3](#_Toc480979920)

[Step 1: Identify the Risks 3](#_Toc480979921)

[Step 2: Assess the Risks 4](#_Toc480979922)

[Assess Impact 5](#_Toc480979923)

[Assess Likelihood 7](#_Toc480979924)

[Score the Risk 7](#_Toc480979925)

[Step 3: Control the Risk 7](#_Toc480979926)

[Current Controls 7](#_Toc480979927)

[Further Actions 8](#_Toc480979928)

[Appendix 1: Low-Risk Placement Risk Assessment Example 9](#_Toc480979929)

[Appendix 2: Medium-Risk Placement Risk Assessment Example 11](#_Toc480979930)

# Background

UCC has a responsibility to its students who are going on Student Placements to take **reasonable** care to ensure that they are provided with a **safe** environment for the duration of their Student Placement and they achieve their academic objectives.

A risk assessment must be completed, following the methodology used in the UCC Risk Management policy, for each individual Student Placement. See <https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/ocla/riskmanagement/UCC-RM-Policy-APPROVED-GB140616.pdf>

Different types of activity will carry varying degrees and types of risk. The risk assessment must be appropriate to the placement.

When performing a risk assessment, the following are useful questions to ask:

1. What could go wrong?
2. How likely is it to happen?
3. What would the impact be of it happening?
4. What should be done to reduce the risk?
5. Who owns the risk?
6. Does anything else need to be done to mitigate the risk?

# Step 1: Identify the Risks

Identify the potential risks that may arise (what could go wrong?). Think about things like:

* type of workplace and activities;
* travel and transportation;
* location and region;
* general environment;
* Insurance limitations.

The IPB Guide on Managing Risk on Third Level Student Placements suggests considering the following questions:

The nature of the work – will it involve:

* Exposure to hazardous substances, such as biological agents, chemical agents that may be harmful to the respiratory system or reproduction system or that may be cancer causing?
* Exposure to bacteria, viruses, fungi and chemicals such as in health care settings, that may cause morbidity and even death?
* Exposure to bullying, including cyber bullying or harassment?
* Manual work or the operation of a motorised vehicle or engineering equipment machinery that may cause injury? The activities to be undertaken while on placement may also pose significant risk for the student, for example where an engineer may be undertaking technical activities on a construction site where the same or equivalent safety practices are not as stringent as in this country.
* Working with vulnerable children and / or adults? If so, Garda vetting (or equivalent for other countries) may be required for placement.
* Shift work or night work? Refer to the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations, 2007

Location

* What risks may arise from travel to the location initially, but also on a daily basis?
* Is it in this country or abroad?
* Are there any political unrest or security issues in the placement country?
* What are the cultural and language differences? For example, is there a risk of a student becoming isolated, or are females viewed and treated in a very different manner to how they are treated in this country?
* Are there any environmental issues, such as unsafe water and sanitary services?
* Is there access to medical facilities that are of an acceptable standard?

# Step 2: Assess the Risks

Having identified the risks, it is then necessary to assess which are going to pose the greatest threat by looking at both the likelihood of the risk occurring and the impact that might result. This provides the overall risk rating.

## Assess Impact

Assess the impact of each risk (what would the impact be of it happening?) using the following matrix as a guide. This matrix contains **examples** under the 5 risk categories Work, Travel and Transportation, Location and/or Regional Factors, General/environmental factors, Insurance Limitations**. Please note this list is not exhaustive.** Schools/departments should **develop and tailor this matrix** to reflect the types of placement undertaken in their area. This will provide for consistency in approach for placements especially those with higher risk profiles.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rating** | **Work**  | **Travel and Transportation** | **Location and/or regional factors** | **General/ environmental factors** | **Insurance Limitations** |
|  | *What work related hazards will the student be exposed to?**What work activities will the student undertake to achieve their learning objectives?* | *Consider travel to and from placement, does the placement involve driving?* | *Is the placement in an area prone to civil unrest? Is the culture familiar? What support is available locally?* | *Any health, safety or welfare risks due to environmental conditions? Any specific precautions required?* | *Are there any insurance limitations or exclusions?* |
| 5 (Severe) | Construction work (e.g. work at height, machinery, mechanical and electrical hazards)Laboratory work (e.g. exposure to toxic or hazardous materials)Community work with known high risk groups (drug abusers, violent patients)Requirement for special licences/qualifications (e.g. diving)Work activities don’t enable the student to achieve their learning objectives | Significant travel to reach placementLocal transport known to be high risk due to poor driving, or poor vehicle standardsDemanding travel during placementStudent required to drive in unfamiliar vehicles or in difficult terrain | Significant civil disorder, or crime (e.g. countries where the DFA advises against travel)Unavoidable lone or remote working in proximity to significant risk (e.g. refugee camps)Emergency medical /rescue services unavailable locallyCommunications likely to be difficult or compromised | Regional health risks require mandatory and specific health protection measures | Locations, activities and /or circumstances where the Provider’s insurance does not cover student for personal or third party liability associated with the student’s work |
| 4 (Major) | Manufacturing environment | Night travel | Higher than normal risk of disorder, crime or comparable danger | Very hot or strenuous working conditions (e.g. manual work outdoors)Very cold working conditions (e.g. placements in cold storage facilities) | The student’s working overseas travel insurance policy specifically excludes ‘business’, specified activities and / or the location |
| 3 (Moderate) | Working in proximity to high risk factors (but not directly with them)Student doesn’t follow work instructionsStudent meeting the public or company clients | Long daily commute | Delays likely in communicating with tutors and others | Regional conditions require some precautionary measuresLone working conditions | Locations, activities and /or circumstances require prior acceptance from the University’s Insurers for cover |
| 2 (Minor) |  | Requirement to drive vehicle in reasonable conditions | Placements in areas identified as low risk by the DFA |  |  |
| 1 (Insignificant) | Office work or other low hazard environments / activities | No significant travel, comfortable daily commute and no driving required for placement | Placements in Ireland with no significant local risks | No significant environmental health risks | Locations, activities and /or circumstances that are automatically included in the University’s cover |

Some higher-risk placements can be the most academically beneficial. If a placement is judged to be high-risk it does not mean that the placement cannot proceed. However, additional controls/actions may be required.

## Assess Likelihood

Assess the likelihood of each risk (how likely is it to happen?) using the five-point scale which is shown in the table below. The risks should be assessed by considering the controls which are currently in place to mitigate each risk.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **RATING** | **SCORE** | **THREAT** |
| Almost Certain | 5 | Expected to occur or a common occurrence80% or above chance of occurrence |
| Likely | 4 | Will probably occur in most circumstances70-79% or above chance of occurrence |
| Possible | 3 | Might occur at some point40-69% or above chance of occurrence |
| Unlikely | 2 | Small chance of occurring at some point10-39% or above chance of occurrence  |
| Rare | 1 | 1 Only in exceptional circumstanceLess than 10% chance of occurrence |

## Score the Risk

Calculate the risk score by multiplying the impact by the likelihood. The total is the risk score. The following table shows the severity of the risk according to the risk score e.g. a risk with likelihood 3 and impact 5 would score 15. This makes it an amber risk.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Red**  | Extreme | 20 - 25 |
| **Amber** | High | 15 - 19.99 |
| **Yellow** | Medium | 8 - 14.99 |
| **Green** | Low | 1 - 7.99 |

# Step 3: Control the Risk

## Current Controls

For each risk identified, identify and implement the management controls to mitigate the risk (what should be done to reduce the risk?). The four main ways to manage risk are:

1. treat: use of controls and actions, training, supervision, risk awareness;
2. transfer: transfer or share risk via insurance, partnerships, etc.;
3. tolerate: accept the risk;
4. terminate: avoid by withdrawing i.e. the University is no longer prepared to take the risk.

The following table provides some examples of the types of controls that may be implemented. When deciding on the controls to implement, likelihood should also be considered.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Risk Category** | **Possible Controls** |
| **Work**  | Confirm training to be provided by Placement OrganisationEnsure student meets any competency requirements Confirm Student will be appropriately supervisedPerform a physical site visitAgree learning objectives with the Placement Organisation |
| **Travel and Transportation** | Agree with the student a regular contact scheduleConfirm student has adequate insuranceBrief student on travel requirements during placement |
| **Location and/or regional factors** | Check with the Department of Foreign Affairs for current travel restrictionsProvide the student with a detailed briefing before travellingProvide the student with a briefing on the local culture and behaviours |
| **General/ environmental factors** | Consult with Student Health for immunisation advice Consult with Student Health on mandatory and specific precautionary measuresEnsure student has adequate insurance cover |
| **Insurance Limitations** | Consult OCLA for insurance adviceHelp the student to seek an alternative insurance provider if not covered by UCC insuranceBrief student of details of insurance cover |

## Further Actions

If there is a high risk score, then it may be necessary to implement further actions to mitigate the risk.

# Appendix 1: Low-Risk Placement Risk Assessment Example

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Placement Organisation:** | Media Print Limited | **Title of Placement:** | Office assistant |
| **Location(s) of Placement:** | Cork | **Duration:** | 6 months |

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| **Brief Description of Placement:**The student will perform office duties under the supervision of the executive assistant. Typical duties will include filing, typing, minute-taking. |

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|  |  |  |  |  | **Assessment of Risk** |  |
| **Risk category** | **Risk** | **Consequence** | **Risk Owner** | **Current Controls** | **Impact** | **Likelihood** | **Score** | **Further Actions** |
| Work | Light office duties |  |  | Spoke to Media Print and confirmed light office duties only | 1 | 1 | 1 |  |
| Travel & Transportation | No travel |  |  | Spoke to Media Print and confirmed no travel | 1 | 1 | 1 |  |
| Location and/or Regional Factors | Local |  |  |  | 1 | 1 | 1 |  |
| General/Environmental Factors | Low risk |  |  |  | 1 | 1 | 1 |  |
| Insurance Limitations | None |  |  |  | 1 | 1 | 1 |  |
| Other |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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**Additional Information:** Document any additional information relevant to the placement activity.

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**Specific Student Information:** Document any information specific to the Student.

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**Assessment carried out by:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name: |  | Date: |  |
| Signature: |  | Review Date: |  |
| Position: |

**Assessment Authorised by Head of School:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name: |  | Date: |  |
| Signature: |  |

# Appendix 2: Medium-Risk Placement Risk Assessment Example

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| **Placement Organisation:** | Generic Corporate Business | **Title of Placement:** | Intern |
| **Location(s) of Placement:** | Ireland, UK, USA | **Duration:** | 6 months |

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| **Brief Description of Placement:**Standard administration relevant to the business. |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  | **Assessment of Risk** |  |
| **Risk category** | **Risk** | **Consequence** | **Risk Owner** | **Current Controls** | **Impact** | **Likelihood** | **Score** | **Further Actions** |
| Work | Student doesn’t follow work instructionsStudent meeting the public or company clients | Unsatisfactory performance reportAcademic outcomesReputational (self, UCC, host) |  | Induction and training provided by University pre-placement and by host company on arrival | 3 | 2 | 6 | Remind students to speak to their manager or academic mentor if they have any concerns |
| Travel & Transportation | Incomplete travel /visa /permit documentationDifficulty finding accommodation | Delayed start or placement cancelledAcademic consequences |  | Pre-placement induction provided by University, responsibilities of all parties clearly understood in advance and in good time | 4 | 2 | 8 | Remind students of their responsibility for travel, transportation and accommodation |
| Location and/or Regional Factors | Terrorism / security / civil disturbance | Student gets caught up in unsafe situation |  | If abroad, take advice from Irish Embassy | 3 | 3 | 9 |  |
| General/ Environmental Factors | Work may involve travel in company or colleague’s vehicleLone working situations | Potentially serious injury from road accidentsStress, risk of attack |  | Students trained to be non-confrontationalStudents trained in what to do in an emergency if working aloneStudents advised re mobile phone and panic alarmStudents advised to consider their safety before accepting potentially unsafe jobs | 3 | 3 | 9 | Check company vehicles are insured and drivers licensed to carry work colleagues as passengersRemind students to speak to the manager or academic mentor if they have any concerns about safety and security or any aspect of placement |
| Insurance Limitations | Placement longer than 90 days so not covered by UCC travel insurance | Student abroad without travel insurance |  | Student required to provide evidence of valid travel insurance | 3 | 3 | 9 |  |
| Other |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Additional Information:** Document any additional information relevant to the placement activity.

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**Specific Student Information:** Document any information specific to the Student.

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**Assessment carried out by:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name: |  | Date: |  |
| Signature: |  | Review Date: |  |
| Position: |

**Assessment Authorised by Head of School:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name: |  | Date: |  |
| Signature: |  |