

Project Placement: Process & Guidance

Introduction

A project placement is an informal, part-time 'secondment' within Queen Mary. A member of staff (the guest) spends a small part of their working time within another team or department, participating in a project of defined scope and timeline, in order to develop skills or gain experience that they could not acquire in their day-to-day role.

The benefits to this scheme include:

- Professional development for the guest, contributing to career development
- Learning gained by the guest which can be shared with their colleagues
- Additional capacity and resource for the host team
- Sharing good practice across the institution
- Breaking down barriers between faculty-based and central Professional Services

There are skill sets and experiences which are incredibly valuable to staff members when trying to advance their careers that cannot easily be developed through traditional formal training. Challenges such as strategic understanding, leading and managing change, project delivery, and financial understanding and control can often be best understood by gaining practical experience.

The roles of participants in project placement

The **host** (usually the person managing/overseeing the project) is responsible for:

- Identifying, and clearly defining, where additional resource is required in order to carry out a particular project or piece of work.
- Defining the learning outcomes for participating in this project: what skills, knowledge and experience the guest is likely to gain.
- Identifying the necessary skills for the guest who will be participating, keeping in mind that this is also a learning opportunity for the guest. For example, a project where they will be learning about data analysis might require basic Microsoft Excel skills.
- Realistically estimating timeframe and other commitments, for example: 0.5 days

per week over three months.

- Using this information to populate a [short form](#) which will be used to advertise potential roles.
- Agreeing details of the placement (including length of time) with the guest and their line manager.
- Identifying and addressing any specific concerns regarding confidentiality or health and safety which may be relevant to the project.
- Liaising with the guest to ensure that any issues of access or disability requirements are addressed in advance of the placement.
- Coordinating with the guest and their manager to monitor the placement while it is ongoing.
- Completing an [evaluation](#) to reflect on their experience and what they've learned.

The **guest** is responsible for:

- Identifying their own development needs and exploring ways these needs could be met, including (but not limited to) project placements.
- Discussing their development needs with their manager and agreeing that a project placement is the best (or only) practical way to do this.
- Ensuring that (where necessary) handover information is made available if elements of their role are being covered by a colleague.
- [Contacting OPD](#) when the details of a placement have been agreed and inform them of the placement they're taking, including start and end date.
- Reporting back on their experiences, both [formally](#) so that there is a log of activity, and in sharing good practice with their team and (when appropriate) the host team.

The **guest's line manager** will:

- Discuss the potential for project placements with the staff member, and identify whether this is likely to be beneficial and possible given the team's existing time commitments.
- Ascertain whether a project placement is the best way for the staff member to gain the desired experience or skills, as opposed to other forms of learning and development e.g. training.
- Support the guest in identifying potential placements.

- Liaise with the guest and host to make practical arrangements e.g. what dates and times will be blocked out for project work in the guest's calendar.
- Arrange backfill or cover depending on the guest's day-to-day responsibilities (considering if this may be a development opportunity for someone else in the team, or an opportunity for an interested colleague to learn more about the guest's work).

Specific project placements

It may be the case that there naturally arises opportunities for project placements, based on existing relationships between teams or departments. For example:

1. A potential guest wants some experience in a particular skill, such as stakeholder engagement.
2. They become aware that another team is about to embark on a major project and would benefit from some extra resource in this area.
3. An informal agreement is made between the host, guest, and line manager that the guest will participate.
4. The documentation is completed and submitted in order to formalise the placement, however the project placement is not advertised.
5. The guest participates in the project and completes an evaluation afterwards.

Administration, evaluation, and data collection

The Organisational & Professional Development team will be responsible for:

- Advising on the process of advertising and taking up project placements
- Providing an application form for potential hosts to advertise placements
- Providing a platform to advertise placements, which allows potential guests to apply
- Requesting and storing evaluation data with regard to the outcomes of project placements

Application and evaluation data will be held centrally by the Organisational & Professional Development team, in order to monitor uptake and outcomes.

Flowchart: Project Placement

