

Placement Policy

2025/26

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Placement Policy

Introduction

Durham University defines placement learning as ‘the learning achieved during an agreed and negotiated period of learning that takes place outside of the institution at which the full or part-time student is enrolled or engaged in learning [where]...the learning outcomes are intended as integral parts of a programme [or module]’.

Placements provide students with the opportunity to engage reflectively with the practical realities of church life, to learn from the ministry of others, and to broaden their experience. As a significant feature of all undergraduate programmes at the College, placements foster an ongoing and critical dialogue between theological knowledge and practical experience. Through this reflective involvement, students are supported in their growth and development as servants of Christ within His Church.

In accordance with the procedures, guidelines, and regulations set out by Durham University, this policy document sets out Oak Hill College’s processes for the approval and management of student placements.

1. Types of Placement

There are three main types of placement that students will encounter during their studies at Oak Hill College:

1. **Field visits** are arranged for the whole class as part of a specific module of study enabling students to engage directly with contexts relevant to their theological learning. An example of this would include a class visit to a place of non-Christian worship as part of a module related to interreligious learning.
2. **Extended visits**, including overseas trips, may be undertaken by individual students or groups of students, either as part of a particular module or as an additional opportunity that supports learning across several modules. Examples of this would include participation in one of Oak Hill College’s annual global education trips to an overseas location for missiological, interreligious, and cross-cultural learning, or field-based data collection towards a dissertation or project.
3. **Context-based placement learning** is arranged as an integral part of a student’s programme, and most commonly involves participation in a church or church-related context. This enables students to develop practical skills and deeper understanding directly related to their programme of study by integrating academic learning with regular ministry practice. Such placements may take the form of an ongoing attachment to a church or parish throughout the duration of study, or a short-term placement in a church or other organisation such as a hospital or school. An example of this would include a year-long regular church-based ministry placement, or a two-week summer placement in a hospital chaplaincy.

2. *Assigned Responsibilities in Placement*

The successful integration of placements into the College's programmes relies on shared responsibilities between the College, the student, and the placement supervisor, each of which is outlined below.

2.1 College responsibilities in placements

In overseeing placements as part of its programmes, Oak Hill College is responsible for the following:

- Establishing and maintaining clear systems and procedures to help students match with placements that are appropriate to their programme of study and stage of formation;
- Providing advice, guidance, and ongoing support to ensure that placements are purposeful, realistic, and fit for the intended learning outcomes;
- Formally approving placements, including reviewing proposed activities, contexts, and supervision arrangements to ensure they meet academic and pastoral expectations;
- Appointing and supporting placement supervisors or equivalent mentors in the placement context, and clarifying expectations regarding their role;
- Ensuring that the student and the placement supervisor have clear information in advance about the expectations for the student's learning, and about what needs to happen for that learning to be successful.
- Responding promptly and appropriately to any issues, concerns, or incidents raised during the placement, including matters related to safeguarding, health and safety, or suitability of the placement context;
- Ensuring that all placements are aligned with relevant College, University, and professional requirements, including safeguarding policies and procedures;
- Overseeing any associated assessment processes, including clarifying academic requirements, setting deadlines, and marking submitted work in accordance with College and University standards;
- Reviewing and evaluating placement arrangements on an ongoing basis, drawing on student feedback and supervisor reports to enhance placement provision and ensure continual improvement.
- Checking that any additional learning or access needs can reasonably be met within the chosen placement

Note: If a conflict or relationship breakdown arises between a student and a placement supervisor, the College will seek to help resolve the matter amicably. If resolution is not possible, the College may, at its discretion or at the request of either party, terminate the placement early. Such termination will not imply that blame is attributed to any party, but is intended to protect the wellbeing of all involved and to maintain a safe, respectful, and harmonious learning environment.

2.2 Student responsibilities in placements

Whilst undertaking a placement with the College, students are responsible for the following:

- Committing oneself fully to engagement with the placement;
- Maintaining contact with the placement supervisor and informing the College's Director of Placements of any problems as soon as they arise;
- Conducting themselves responsibly as a representative of the College and University;
- Fulfilling the academic commitments of the placement and submitting work for assessment as required for the module;
- Taking reasonable measures to ensure health and safety and that of others during the placement, including familiarisation and compliance with all safeguarding policies and procedures;
- Taking particular measures to ensure health and safety in the case of a placement which has been arranged individually (aside from compulsory requirements).
- Fulfil all necessary Research Ethics obligations where required (see Research Ethics policy).

2.3 Placement/Placement supervisor responsibilities in placements

For all placements, a named person in the placement context should act as a supervisor and liaise with Oak Hill to ensure that the placement offers the student the opportunity to achieve specified learning outcomes. Placement supervisors are responsible for the following:

- Providing appropriate induction and orientation to the placement context, including relevant policies and expectations;
- Offering regular guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback to support the student's personal, spiritual, and professional development during the placement;
- Completing required paperwork, reports, or monitoring forms in a timely and accurate manner, as requested by the College;
- Alerting the College promptly if significant concerns arise regarding the student's conduct, engagement, or wellbeing, or if there are issues that may affect the suitability or safety of the placement;
- Contributing to the student's reflective learning by helping them make connections between academic study and ministry practice, as appropriate to the placement context.
- Maintaining a safe working environment, and suitable insurance to cover all activities of the student within the placement.

Students undertaking a placement will be provided with a placement handbook which clearly outlines the role of the placement within the programme of study. It will also set out the student's obligations during the placement, and describe the support available to students, including emergency contacts and guidance on how to address problems or complaints.

Placement churches are a significant part of understanding how churches function well as places of pastoral care. However, this does not negate the need for individual pastoral care and the College has a responsibility for this (as well as the church). Students with any concerns in this area during the course of a placement should talk to their Fellowship Group tutor, the Director of Placements and/or a trusted person at church. Where appropriate and normally with consent, information may be shared between the College and a placement church where necessary to enable appropriate pastoral care.

3. *Assigning and managing church-based placements*

Church-based placements are an integral part of formation and training at Oak Hill College. This section explains the process by which students are matched with placement churches, taking into account both the requirements of external bodies (where applicable) and the personal circumstances, prior experiences, and learning goals of each student. The College aims to balance institutional requirements with individual needs, in dialogue with students and relevant church leaders, to ensure placements contribute meaningfully to each student's ministry development.

3.1 Process for Church of England Ordinands

In the case of Church of England ordinands, the process begins with a careful review of the student's past ministry experience alongside the Ministry Division requirements, usually detailed in BAP reports or DDO Formation Plans. Sponsoring bishops may also make specific requests concerning the placement of candidates. The student's own goals for their time at Oak Hill (discussed with their Personal Tutor and including input from their sending church minister as part of the admissions process) are also taken into account, as well as personal and family needs, transport considerations, and any special requests noted on the Weekly Church Placement Form. Throughout this process, the College seeks to consult with the student concerned as fully as possible.

3.2 Process for all other students

For all other students, placements are arranged in evangelical churches, where students may remain for the duration of their time at Oak Hill. When deciding on these placements, the College considers each student's past experience and their goals for training at Oak Hill (normally discussed with their sending church minister during admissions, with whom the College may make direct contact at this stage), together with personal and family needs, transport options, and any special requests indicated on the Weekly Church Placement Form. As with ordinands, the College consults closely with the student concerned as much as possible.

3.3 General Information for all students

Students are encouraged, where feasible, to make their placement church their 'home church' during their time at Oak Hill and to worship there regularly with their family if applicable. The College recognises that it may not always be possible to meet family needs entirely as students might wish; in such cases, every effort is made to arrange a placement that does not conflict with the family's chosen church, though this cannot always be guaranteed. Any such arrangement must be approved by the Director of Placements.

Oak Hill seeks to make placements a stimulating and enriching experience for students, supervisors, and churches alike. To this end, the College provides students with sufficient tutorial support to help them learn graciously from, and serve within, churches of varying traditions. Students are encouraged to discuss any concerns or difficulties arising from their placements with the Director of Placements, ensuring that challenges can be addressed promptly and constructively.

To ensure placements are appropriately safeguarded, placements can only begin when:

- The supervisor has returned their signed Agreement to the College, together with a suitable, current Church safeguarding policy; and
- The student has been enrolled in the College; and
- The College has received the student's DBS check and processed any necessary risk assessments which that check identifies.

Students may attend their placement church as members of the congregation from any date but may not be identified in any way to the congregation as placement students, nor may they accept any positions of responsibility in the church, or complete any of their required reflections, until all of these checks are complete. The student and the supervisor will be emailed to confirm the start of each placement once the checks are done.

3.4 Academic requirements for compulsory placements

All compulsory placements take place as part of a module (which is reflected in the relevant module outlines).

3.4.1 First-Year Church Placement (*TMM1437 Introducing Theological Reflection*)

The placement element of this module will run throughout both semesters of the first year (or throughout the duration of the CertHE programme); the taught material is limited to Semester One. Orientation to placements and to theological reflection and practical theology will be given in the taught element of the module.

Requirements:

- Attendance on a minimum of twenty agreed occasions;
- A Report from the Placement Supervisor, towards the end of the second semester, reflecting on your involvement with the church and confirming satisfactory completion of the placement.
- Two written reflections on your placement experience submitted as part of the Set of Theological Reflections

Objectives:

- To acquaint each student better with local church life and ministry patterns in a given context;
- To develop each student's Christian character and some ministry competencies;
- To provide an opportunity for each student to demonstrate self-awareness and theological reflection in relation to the dynamics of church life.

Assessment

- A Set of Theological Reflections including two on the placement experience.

Beyond the provisions outlined above, there are no fixed requirements for the placement in this or any other module. This flexibility is intentional, both to avoid imposing on the life of the church and to acknowledge that students may have diverse learning goals and vocational paths.

The TMM1437 church placement is designed to provide practical experience that contributes to the following programme level learning outcomes:

- Knowledgeable discussion of some core aspects of Christian discipleship, such as worship, mission, spirituality or ethics and the questions to which they give rise. (SSK3, CertHE)
- Drawing on appropriate methodologies and various relevant disciplines, with guidance from an experienced practitioner, to reflect on experience and practice in the context of discipleship, mission and ministry, and communication of this accurately and reliably in a range of contexts. (SSS3, CertHE)
- Carrying out a guided task that involves: independent inquiry, management of time and resources; using IT; meeting deadlines; evaluation of tasks and learning from them. (KS3, CertHE)
- Recognition of key issues in one's own personal and professional development (KS4, CertHE)

3.4.2 Second-Year Church Placement (*TMM2321 Developing Ministry and Worship in Context*)

This second year placement forms part of TMM2321 Developing Ministry and Worship in Context and will run throughout both semesters of the second year (or DipHE programme) alongside the taught material.

Requirements:

- Attendance on a minimum of twenty agreed occasions;
- A Report from the Placement Supervisor, towards the end of the second semester, reflecting on your involvement with the church and confirming satisfactory completion of the placement.
- Written Assignment: A multi-part written assignment that integrates your placement experience with the taught curriculum. It should include approximately 100 words commenting on the supervisor's report and around 800 words on each of the three reflective, integrative topics chosen from a wide range of options.

Objectives:

- To allow each student to engage thoughtfully and critically with local church life and ministry in a given context;
- To develop and extend each student's own Christian character and some ministry competencies;
- To enable opportunities for each student to demonstrate a robust self-awareness and theological reflection in relation to the dynamics of church life.

Assessment:

- Written Assignment: A multi-part written assignment integrating experience of the placement with the taught curriculum. Approximately 100 words commenting on the supervisor's report and around 800 words on each of the three reflective, integrative topics chosen from a wide range of options.

The TMM2321 church placement is designed to provide practical experience that contribute to the following programme level learning outcomes:

- Description of practices of Christian discipleship, including mission and worship, analysing theological, ecclesial and contextual understandings of such practices and the nature of discipleship, in relation to specific contexts in and beyond the church. (SSK3, DipHE)
- Drawing on key aspects of relevant disciplines to begin developing a critical analysis of contemporary situations, reflecting on practice and experience, in the context of discipleship, mission and ministry, recognising the importance of knowing the limits of one's knowledge. (SSS3, DipHE)
- Taking responsibility for a task that involves independent inquiry; the management of time, resources and use of IT; meeting deadlines; evaluating the task and learning from it. (KS3, DipHE)
- Planning one's own personal and professional development. (KS4, DipHE)

4. Health and safety and other practical considerations

This section outlines essential guidance to help ensure student safety and wellbeing during placements, as well as practical considerations related to travel, accommodation, and related activities.

4.1 Safeguarding Concerns

Any safeguarding concerns arising during the placement must be reported immediately to the placement's Safeguarding Officer, following their procedures. The concern should also be reported to the Director of Placements as soon as reasonably possible, so that support can be provided and the College can assess any ongoing risk within the placement.

4.2 Reporting Health and Safety Concerns

In the rare occurrence that a student encounters an unsafe situation or identifies any health and safety concerns during a placement, whether physical or emotional, the matter should be raised promptly with the Placement Supervisor. The Director of Placements should also be informed so that the College can exercise its duty of care.

4.3 Accommodation/Travel/Recreational Activity Arrangements

For compulsory placements that are an integral part of academic programme modules, placements are arranged within commuting distance of the student's residence. No college funding for travel or accommodation is provided except where arranged through a sending diocese.

For optional placements, both domestic and international, it is the responsibility of the student to arrange their own accommodation during the placement period. Students should ensure that their chosen accommodation complies with health and safety standards (see Durham's **Extract from Durham University Learning & Teaching Handbook – 3.7.3 Placement learning – health and safety and insurance issues**). Students must read **this guidance prior**

to making arrangements for travel, accommodation and any recreational activities undertaken during the course of the placement.

4.4 Expenses

Students may incur expenses for travelling to their weekly church placements. Ordinands may be able to claim these back from their Diocese. The College is not, unfortunately, in a position to reimburse placement expenses for non-Ordinands; however, students who experience difficulties with this should speak to the Director of Pastoral Care/Placements as soon as possible.

5. *International Placements*

Overseas placements can provide valuable opportunities for cross-cultural learning, personal growth, and deeper insight into global mission. At Oak Hill College, these placements are overseen by the Director of Cross-Cultural Training and are subject to specific guidelines designed to ensure student safety, educational value, and alignment with best practice in mission and ministry.

Students planning to undertake a placement outside the UK should take careful note of the following:

- Placements will normally be arranged by the student in partnership with an established mission agency, and must adhere to the Global Connections Code of Best Practice for Short-Term Mission.
- Students who have prior overseas experience and are returning to contexts where they have previously lived may arrange placements directly with contacts they know, whether or not those contacts belong to a mission agency.
- All overseas placements must be approved by the Director of Cross-Cultural Training, who reserves the right to decline any placement deemed unsuitable.
- Students must provide the Director of Cross-Cultural Training with full details of the placement location and itinerary before departure.
- Students must also supply evidence of adequate insurance, including emergency evacuation cover.
- The agency or sponsoring individuals overseas will be provided with the College's contact details and those of the Director of Cross-Cultural Training.
- Prior to departure, the student and the Director of Cross-Cultural Training will agree on contact procedures and communication protocols during the placement.
- If any conflict arises overseas, or if the student is involved in conduct that is incompatible with Christian witness, the Director of Cross-Cultural Training will address the matter if it cannot be resolved locally by agency personnel.
- Should arrangements overseas break down and no suitable alternative can be offered by the agency, the student will be permitted to arrange a new placement without academic penalty.
- In the event of a serious crisis which cannot be resolved through other means, the College may arrange for personnel to travel to the location, subject to Foreign & Commonwealth Office advice and in consultation with the student's family.

- Additional regulations may be applied in special circumstances to protect student welfare or ensure the placement meets learning objectives.
- On return, every student will receive a personal debriefing. If the student has encountered traumatic events, the College will arrange for appropriate counselling support.

6. *The Oak Hill College Code of Conduct*

All staff and students sign up to this code of conduct annually. Students on placement are expected to behave consistently with this at all times.

I will:

- Treat everyone with dignity, keeping my language, attitude and body language respectful
- Speak up about inappropriate attitudes and behaviour that might be harmful to others
- Never use drugs except for medical reasons under appropriate supervision
- Not smoke in the presence of a child or young person, or within 5 metres of any College building
- Not be under the influence of alcohol when responsible for a child, young person or adult at risk, or to the detriment of my behaviour
- Avoid physical contact except where appropriate to the needs of an activity (e.g. sport) and within normal boundaries
- Obtain consent before taking photographs/video of anyone.
- Never use sexually provocative words or gestures, or any forms of physical punishment
- Never scapegoat, ridicule or reject an individual or group or allow others to do so
- Not show favouritism towards an individual or group
- Not encourage attention-seeking behaviour towards me by a child, young person or adult at risk
- Not permit an unknown adult to have access to children, young people or adults at risk
- Not invade an individual's privacy
- Not befriend children, young people or an adult who may be at risk on social media
- Always operate within the principles, procedure and guidelines of the Oak Hill College Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding Essentials guide.

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Date of Approval	28/08/25
Approving Committee	N/A
Status	Approved
Previous Reviews	N/A
Next Review	July 2026