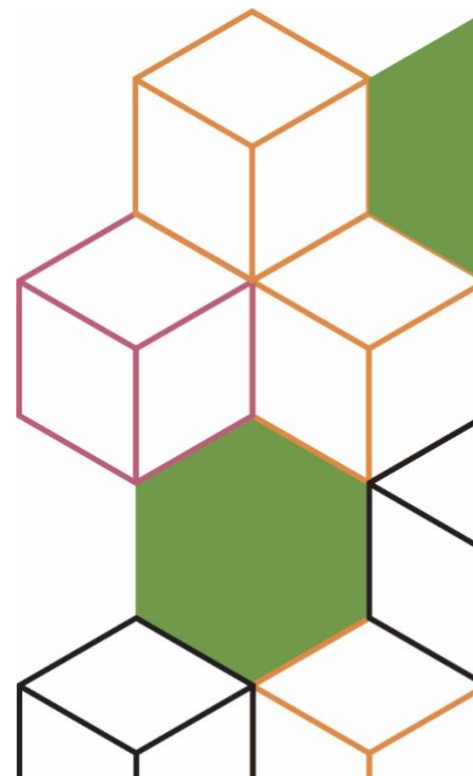


July  
**2024**

Graduate Student  
Association

**Placement: Student  
perspectives,  
concerns and  
priorities for change**



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## Acknowledgements

Data collected and report developed and written by Will McHenry, GSA's Education (Coursework) Officer, with support from the GSA Policy and Advocacy Team.

## Executive summary

At the University of Melbourne, placements (including internship and work-integrated-learning (WIL) units) are a cornerstone of student education as they allow students to consolidate and gain academic and practical skills in their chosen area of work. Additionally, placements allow students to develop collaboration, communication and teamwork skills, leading them to be more prepared to enter employment after graduation.

It is important to note, however, that negative experiences while on placement can occur. This includes discrimination, bullying and sexual misconduct. Negative experiences can have marked effects on student safety and wellbeing. They can also diminish the benefits that can be gained from placement.

In 2021, GSA developed the 'Safety on Placement' Report, detailing student perspectives of student safety while on placement. The most pertinent finding from this report was that students were demotivated to report incidents occurring on placement. This was attributed to a fear of being reprimanded, potential impacts on employability in the field, not having adequate support or previously having poor experiences with the reporting process.

Considering the University's current work on student safety on placement, GSA conducted research in 2023 to renew our understanding of students' placement experiences and to identify changes over the past three years. This study was designed to gain a broader understanding of student experiences on placement, rather than focusing solely on issues experienced while on placement.

This report is based on student testimonies collected via an online survey and in-person focus group that included graduate students from all faculties. This report found that students are still facing issues of mistreatment while on placement, resulting in poor wellbeing.

Poor wellbeing was also found to be driven by:

- the impact of demanding and compulsory placements on student finances and living costs, especially in faculties where no travel or accommodation support was provided;
- the lack of preparation prior to placement, making placement activities difficult to complete;
- a lack of clarity regarding what the placement provider and the student's responsibilities and expectations should be.

This report identified that demotivation to report negative or harmful experiences is still prevalent among students.

This report also identified positive experiences students had on placement. The most significant of these were having helpful and welcoming supervisors and gaining valuable experience that is relevant and useful when working in the field.

GSA recognises that the University has taken steps to improving students' safety on placement and recommends further action be taken address new and persistent issues. Namely, those relating to student finances, placement preparation and managing expectations during placement.

### **GSA recommends that the University:**

1. **Ensure** that faculties and Schools are collecting feedback from all students post-placement to identify and promote positively-reviewed providers.
2. **Encourage** faculties and Schools to schedule regular information-sharing events where students can provide feedback and learn from their peers.
3. **Ensure** students are informed of appropriate reporting and support channels (e.g. – Safer Communities) prior to starting a placement.
4. **Ensure** relevant University policies (e.g. – the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy and Respect Action Plan) directly incorporate placement-specific information.
5. **Advocate** for paid placements with placement providers and government, so that students can be adequately supported to undertake placement.
6. **Find** and cover the cost of accommodation for students on rural or regional placements, especially if a rural/regional placement is compulsory.
7. **Ensure** that placements held in non-teaching periods are optional.
8. **Support** faculties and Schools to co-design placement preparation materials with students and/or GSA, to ensure they are relevant and useful.
9. **Ensure** placement preparation materials are delivered at least 3 weeks before a student commences their placement
10. **Ensure** the University is in consistent contact with providers, especially to inform learning expectations and quickly resolve issues.
11. **Use** student feedback data to assess values, skills and practices for potential provider models.

## Introduction

### About GSA

The University of Melbourne Graduate Student Association (GSA) is the independent representative organisation for all graduate coursework and research students at the University of Melbourne. We are led by 8 GSA Board members, 11 Representative Councillors and 17 Faculty Councillors, who are all elected University of Melbourne graduate students. On behalf of over 40,000 constituents, we represent graduate student interests to the University and wider community, provide student engagement events, activities, and information to the graduate student community, and support 150 affiliated graduate student groups.

GSA's vision is for inclusive, empowered graduate student communities that achieve meaningful and holistic university experiences. Our objectives are to achieve and support representation, academic support, transition to work, engaged and healthy communities, and organisational sustainability.

### Context

Placement, internship and work-integrated-learning (WIL) units (all referred to in this report as 'placement') are a cornerstone of student education. These units allow for students to consolidate their academic knowledge, strengthen practical skills and develop understanding of the field of work that their degree may lead them. Unfortunately, negative placement experiences may occur, diminishing many of the benefits of placements students may otherwise enjoy. Rates of reporting for these incidents are varied, so often the true extent of issues on placement is not known or recorded.

Negative experiences regarding placement include indirect obstacles, such as balancing external employment with other coursework study commitments. It also includes direct incidents or risks to the student, encompassing physical (e.g. injury or assault) and mental issues (e.g. burnout, harassment, coercion, etc.). This report focuses particularly on 'student mistreatment', a broad term that encompasses the following definitions, adapted from Chung et al.<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Melody P. Chung et al., "Exploring medical students' barriers to reporting mistreatment during clerkships: a qualitative study," *Medical Education Online* 23, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10872981.2018.1478170>.

- **Bullying:** repeated, unreasonable behaviour that creates a risk to a person's physical or psychological health (e.g. pushing, yelling, excluding, intimidating etc.).
- **Discrimination:** directly treating someone unfavourably or putting an unreasonable requirement/condition in place to disadvantage someone, because of a personal characteristic (e.g. age, disability, physical features, race, etc.).
- **Sexual misconduct:** any sexual act or behaviour that a person does not consent to, including sexual assault (and other sexual offenses) and sexual harassment.

Such incidents can arise from multiple sources including supervisors, placement provider employees, other students and the general public (e.g. patients, customers and clients).

Negative placement experiences can have a significant impact on students' long-term mental wellbeing and academic performance. Under the Higher Education Standards Framework and central University policies, the University of Melbourne is required to ensure students receive quality learning through placement providers in a safe environment with support for their mental wellbeing. Additional obligations include having processes for reporting and resolving incidents that occur on placement.

GSA notes the importance of ensuring that adequate support is provided for all students, including those whose learning occurs in environments not solely under the control of the University. We recognise that the University has already taken steps to improve tracking, reporting and implementing solutions for placement safety. Further improvements would provide an opportunity to guide students in academic and personal growth, producing capable, well-rounded and confident graduates.

This report aimed to investigate whether students' current views and experiences regarding placement have improved since the publication of GSA's previous report. This report was designed to be broader in its scope – instead of only analysing placement safety – in order to assess students' overall view of placement. From this, recommendations can be made to address placement as a whole

### **GSA's 2021 'Safety on Placement' report**

In 2021, GSA released a report detailing quantitative and qualitative findings from students who completed a survey regarding student safety on

placement <sup>2</sup>. This report identified existing issues with student safety on placement (Table 1).

Table 1: Placement Issues identified from student testimony

| Issue identified                        | Supporting findings  |
|---|--|
| Demotivation to report                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student testimony that previous reporting had been mishandled, meaning they did not trust the University would help when reporting future incidents.</li> <li>• Student testimony fearing consequences would arise if they made a report (e.g. fear of being perceived as a problem, fears reporting would impact employability and fear of being reprimanded for not reporting sooner).</li> </ul> |
| Not knowing where/how to report         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only 66% of participants knew where to report assault or harassment that they experienced or witnessed.</li> <li>• Student testimony that they encountered difficulties when trying to report negative experiences.</li> </ul>  |
| Confusion of where responsibilities lie | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 92% of participants felt both the University and placement provider have a responsibility to prepare students for and to ensure safe placement.</li> </ul>  |
| Inadequate placement preparation        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only 63% of participants felt adequately prepared by the University for issues relating to safety on placement.</li> </ul>  |

Notable recommendations from this report, which are still pertinent, included:

- Prevention, through actively reviewing policies and work environments of all placement sites, and only using placement sites that have clear sexual misconduct policies and procedures and that nurture a respectful workplace culture.

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<sup>2</sup> Graduate Student Association and The University of Melbourne, *Safety on Placement*, vol. 2024 (Melbourne (AU): Graduate Student Association, The University of Melbourne, 2021), Internet. <https://gsa.unimelb.edu.au/policy-and-advocacy/research-and-policies/>.

- Intervention, through prioritising student safety when issues of misconduct are reported.
- Future-proofing, by embedding safety as a theme into orientation and other programs .

## Methodology

A dual approach of student survey and focus groups was utilised to collect data for this report. Both the survey and focus group aimed to gain knowledge of student's current attitudes towards placements, as well as recommendations for change. Specifically, the focus group allowed students time to explain their experiences on placements. As such, a holistic understanding of the student perspective was attained, and prominent issues faced on placement were identified. 11 students from Science, Education, Medicine, Dentistry and Health Science attended the focus group. The survey yielded 112 genuine responses spanning all faculties in the University.

### *A note on the student testimonies:*

Due to the number of testimonies received, not all could be included in this report. Some testimonies have been edited due to spelling errors and length, including those that were given verbally and not transcribed verbatim. All efforts have been made to represent all testimonies as faithfully and accurately as possible.



## Results

While GSA's 2021 report focused on students' safety while on placement, this recent study was wider in scope. GSA examined students' experiences with misconduct, balancing personal finances, preparing for placements, confusion regarding their responsibilities and barriers to reporting misconduct. Positive experiences with placements were also explored to better inform recommendations for change.

### **Mistreatment**

Multiple testimonies from students described directly experiencing mistreatment while on placement, particularly from supervisors. This points to the current discrepancy between incidents occurring on placement and incidents actually reported to the University. Beyond mistreatment from supervisors, student-student misconduct is known to be a prevalent issue in the university sector, especially in placement environments where perpetrators may know the University has less innate surveillance and control.

The main issues on placement that were described included repeated themes of discrimination and mistreatment from supervisors while having limited emotional support. A lack of accessible support from the University for students to feel protected and supported was said to exacerbate these issues. It also suggests that current processes of provider screening and feedback collection are inadequate at identifying problematic providers. This may partly be due to employees of the placement provider not being familiar with the standards and expectations from the University of Melbourne, as they are not employees of the University. Regardless, it indicates a need for further assessment of providers and accessible and robust feedback mechanisms for students to report concerns and incidents.

Crucially, despite incidents of mistreatment varying in severity, they can still have similar impact on student wellbeing, demonstrating the need for accessible support services all students can access. Ideally, this support could be received independently of reporting an issue, so that students who are apprehensive about reporting or the reporting process can still receive support and advice.

## Student Testimony

*"My supervisor pushed me down to the floor, as a 'demonstration of what an elderly patient looks like when being examined'."*

**– MDHS Student**

*"Some of my peers faced discrimination based on gender, sexual identities, and dietary choices."*

**– Science Student**

*"As a requirement, we had to complete 20 days on a dairy farm. Some sleep in tents or their cars on the side of the road because they can't find rural accommodation. It's unsafe, especially when you are alone on a rural farm".*

**– Veterinary Science Student**

*"I do think the University should do more to ensure that students wellbeing is ok during internships, particularly when they are being undertaken in areas such as Family Violence. Whilst I was ok and do not feel I needed additional support, I think creating an individual check-in with each student, particularly in a 'high-risk' internship would be an appropriate step moving forward."*

**– Law Student**

*"Modifications for disability and extenuating circumstances need to be made explicit at the start of each semester. The placement team put the proverbial "fear of God" into students making us feel like we will instantly fail the unit if we get sick just one day!"*

**– Education Student**

*"More support from the University staff during this period to check on overall well-being."*

**– Science Student**

*"Enhanced Support: Offering more robust support systems, including dedicated advisors or mentors, can help students navigate challenges during their placements."*

**– Business Student**

## **Reporting mistreatment**

Students reported feeling unsupported throughout the reporting process, which discouraged them from reporting future incidents. The survey findings demonstrated demotivation for students to report incidents with many being fearful of implications for themselves and their career. Another issue raised was that students did not know where or how to report incidences. These findings were also reflected in the 2021 report.

This is of particular concern considering that if students are discouraged from reporting, there is no clear record of the number of incidents on placement occurring, where they are occurring and patterns in incidents based on faculty, course and placement provider. Without clear records, the University cannot efficiently implement solutions to ameliorate incidents on placement.

### Fear of consequences

Some students explained that speaking up is not common practice in their career paths, meaning that this could have negative repercussions on them in the future, such as being labelled difficult to work with or not being fairly considered for roles they apply for. This is particularly an issue for students on long-term placements or placements at a provider that may also employ them in the future.

Students specifically described the reporting process as difficult and unsupportive. It was also understood to discourage students from reporting future incidents due to emotional concerns and fear of judgement. Judgement described included not being able to handle the situations themselves or not reporting the issue earlier. Similarly, logistical support after a report had been filed, such as regular emails on the progress of the report, was lacking and students felt abandoned by the University with little knowledge on what was actually happening with their report.

Lack of reporting also means that students may be “suffering in silence” without receiving adequate support after experiencing traumatic incidents on placement. This suffering may continue even after the student ceases placement, and may have implications on their ability to study, graduate and enter the workforce. Students on compulsory, long-term placements (e.g. medical students) are at particular risk of these issues.

### Lack of knowledge of reporting process

Students described confusion about whether they should speak to the placement provider or the University to report an issue and what individual

person/role at these establishments should they seek out. An important finding from the focus group was that students were not aware of 'Safer Communities' including its roles in reporting and emotional support and its independence from the University. Other students pointed out that the reporting process isn't always straightforward and can be convoluted by having to complete multiple forms.

### Student Testimony

*"There should be an easier and more reliable way to report discrimination and other negative things experienced on a placement. The incident report website is easy to use, but other reports are not so easy to make. There should also be more action on the university staff's part rather than just telling us we should have addressed it ourselves."*

**– Veterinary Science Student**

*"The university just throws more resources at you, without actually trying to understand the issue or why I was so upset by it. I know that I won't receive proper support if I try to report another issue in the future."*

**– MDHS Student**

*"We are so scared of failing that no one speaks up. You pretty much walk into a room with the coordinators and get grilled – 'how are you going to be a doctor if you can't handle it on placement'."*

**– MDHS Student**

### Recommendations

**R1** Ensure that faculties and Schools are collecting feedback from all students post-placement to identify and promote positively-reviewed providers.

**R2** Encourage faculties and Schools to schedule regular information-sharing events where students can provide feedback and learn from their peers.

**R3** Ensure students are informed of appropriate reporting and support channels (e.g. – Safer Communities) prior to starting a placement.

**R4** Ensure relevant University policies (e.g. – the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy and Respect Action Plan) directly incorporate placement-specific information.

## **Balancing placement, study and life**

The logistics associated with undertaking placements – managing finances, transportation, accommodation and timeframes – were found to place an additional burden on students. This was said to impact not only their performance while on placement, but also their ability to balance other aspects of their life and studies.

### Student finances

The demanding nature of placement meant that students often could not work during this time, leading to loss of employment and difficulty paying living costs (such as housing, bills and food). GSA notes that many students are impacted by the housing crisis and rising cost of living. In our 2023 Graduate Experiences Survey, ‘cost of living’ and ‘rent/housing’ were identified as the top two issues graduate students are experiencing in their day-to-day lives. Some students may try and work during placement periods, leaving them exhausted and burnt out. For students who must complete placements as a requirement of their course, there are few alternatives. Issues with balancing finances were of particular concern for students on long-term placements (such as those in the MDHS faculty).

Costs related to transportation and accommodation were also identified as a logistical issue, especially for students having to travel to rural locations. Students noted that some faculties do not subsidise transportation or accommodation costs. Some faculties were reported to provide students with minimal assistance in sourcing accommodation for mandatory rural placements. This can place students in a financial deficit due to a placement being made compulsory by their faculty.

While the introduction of the *Commonwealth Prac Payment* may ease the financial burden of placement for some students, GSA recognises that many students will continue to struggle. The new payment will be available to students in teaching, nursing and midwifery and social work courses.<sup>3</sup> At this stage, the payment will not be extended to students from other courses with mandatory placements, like medicine and veterinary science. The additional \$319.50 per week provided through this payment is also unlikely to be sufficient for students in severe financial distress.

### Student wellbeing

Students also reported not having enough time to dedicate to their wellbeing, due to the burden of placement. Some students expressed fears

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<sup>3</sup> “Commonwealth Prac Payment”, Department of Education, modified June 2024, <https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education/commonwealth-prac-payment>

that they would be judged for not being able to handle the requirements of placement, despite some requirements being unfairly demanding. This is concerning as not having enough time to destress may increase the risk of safety incidents occurring while on placement. It may also contribute to the lack of reporting or seeking support, as students may be too burnt out to undergo the reporting process.

While placement is designed to emulate the demanding work environment, this should not be at the detriment of the student's wellbeing. At its best, placement is a valuable opportunity to gain practical experience in a supportive environment. The University is, first and foremost, a space for teaching and learning prior to employment, and so, students should be able to receive this teaching appropriately.

### Student Testimony

*"I was given the advice to quit my part time job if I was struggling with the time commitments of. The university obviously doesn't understand some people need to work to survive."*

**– Education Student**

*placement*

*"The University doesn't really take into consideration about workload, placements and as there's Saturday placements, doesn't take into account people need an income from jobs to sustain a living."*

**– MDHS Student**

*"Financially it was a lot to get to my placements and to pay for my own accommodation. Most of the large animal placements are far away and it can be difficult to get there."*

**– Veterinary Science Student**

*"To spread out placement blocks more or not have then full time for so long. It's a real struggle physically and mentally. People still need to work to survive and pay bills/ food/ rent. To be more flexible with rosters."*

**– MDHS Student**

*"I'm currently undertaking 2 full days of placement each week which requires 3 hours return travel. I receive no financial support to undertake this despite the subject being a course requirement."*

**– MDHS Student**

*"Having to stop paid work during the week and working on weekends to survive, not being able to have a break for 4-6 weeks while doing assignments and exams at the same time is very difficult to be able to maintain life and it's expenses, no time to look after myself it sucks."*

**– MDHS Student**

*“Having paid placements will help many of us be able to focus on placement and coursework without having to balance the financial struggle of having to pay rent, bills, groceries, and transport to the hospital.”*

**– MDHS Student**

*“The financial strain of having to stop work to do placement has been stressful. Knowing that this will continue for a year and a half is definitely daunting.”*

**– Fine Arts and Music Student**

*“40 hours/week of unpaid work, especially as a final year nursing student who can practice very independently and does the same work that others get paid for, is very difficult. No time to work paid jobs, or this comes at the expense of mental wellbeing and academic performance (simultaneous assignments).”*

**– MDHS Student**

*“We were only able to complete placement during the holidays and not in semester. This is really hard for international students who usually use the holidays to visit family they haven’t seen all year. My mental wellbeing really suffered.”*

**– Veterinary Science Student**

#### **Relevant Recommendations:**

**R5** Advocate for paid placements with placement providers and government, so that students can be adequately supported to undertake placement.

**R6** Find and cover the cost of accommodation for students on rural or regional placements, especially if a rural/regional placement is compulsory.

**R7** Ensure that placements held in non-teaching periods are optional.

## Placement preparation

While GSA's 2021 report found that students did not feel prepared to deal with issues of safety on placement, specifically. More recent data shows that many students do not feel prepared for placements in general. Students describe being provided with limited introductory training and minimal guidance on how to deal with issues that commonly arise on placement. Some students reported receiving key information about their placement at the last minute.

Inadequate placement preparation contributed to students feeling nervous, stressed and ill-equipped to manage assigned tasks. In the focus group, students described having to undertake additional tasks to organise their placements (e.g. managing their own attendance hours, contacting the provider to communicate information about what their placement entails, etc.). Some were also left to manage unforeseen issues with minimal guidance. This could negatively impact their learning and overall placement experience. These experiences may also affect a student's wellbeing while on placement.

Students also explained that, in some cases, the preparation materials they did receive were too simplistic to be useful. Students reported that these materials would explain basic tasks and reminders (e.g. the importance of making a timetable and remembering not to use your phone), making them unsuitable for a graduate student audience.

### Delivery of placement preparation information

Students suggested potential changes to placement preparation sessions organised by their faculties to ensure they were relevant and useful. Participants suggested having more opportunities to ask questions to experienced professionals in the field. They were also interested in receiving more information and examples related to managing common placement issues (e.g. – managing difficult patients or writing a lesson plan). Students also expressed an interest in having placement preparation information delivered by more experienced students from their respective courses. Some students believed this method would be more engaging than receiving placement preparation information from teachers or lecturers.



## Student Testimony

*“In terms of logistics, the communication between the teaching team and the students has been poor. The placement details are always announced very late, instead of being announced at least 4 weeks in advance as mentioned at the beginning of the semester. Even though we've been asked to provide information about our transportation situation, it seems that this information hasn't been genuinely taken into consideration when assigning placements.”*

**– MDHS Student**

*“After the school allocated my roommate to a hospital and had completed the placement for one week, the school told her that the hospital doesn't have enough register nurse to teach the students. Then the school postponed their placement in this hospital.”*

**– MDHS Student**

*“I wish the preparation day was actually for helpful things like writing a lesson plan. It's a graduate course, people have had jobs before. We don't need to be told 'remember to bring your lunch!'.”*

**– Education Student**

### Relevant Recommendations:

**R8** Support faculties and Schools to co-design placement preparation materials with students and/or GSA, to ensure they are relevant and useful.

**R9** Ensure placement preparation materials are delivered at least 3 weeks before a student commences their placement.

## **Confusion regarding responsibilities and expectations**

Concerningly, a lack of clarity among students about the responsibilities of the placement provider, the University and themselves was prevalent. This confusion was understood to be driven by a lack of communication between the placement providers and the University. It also meant that, in some cases, students did not receive adequate support from either party.

### Student expectations

Students reported a lack of clarity in what was expected of them while on placement. This was understood to contribute to the variability of placement experiences. It may also prevent students from making the most of their placement experience. Many students reported that the responsibilities assigned to them by placement providers would have been more suitable for graduates in the field. This mismatch of expectations can place an immense workload on students, leading them to sacrifice their wellbeing in order to manage.

Conversely, other students felt they had not been given adequate opportunities to gain hands-on experience while on placement. Students in these circumstances can be understood to receive teaching – rather than experience – from their placements. This is problematic, given that these students may be receiving the same teaching they would from their regular classes, with the added challenges associated with placements (e.g. – the strain on student finances and time needed to undertake placements).

### Lack of communication between the University and placement providers

When a placement provider is unclear about what the University expects of them, a student's experience can suffer. For one, it can lead to poor student wellbeing and burnout. Worryingly, it may also contribute to students' experiences of misconduct going unaddressed. Some students reported being judged by their placement providers for not knowing what was expected of them, despite these students following the guidance provided by their faculties. A lack of proper communication between the University and placement providers may lower a student's trust in either, or both, parties. Students may also internalise the belief that the University fails to provide adequate support to anyone, even established placement providers. This, in turn, may discourage students from accessing support when issues do arise.

A lack of proper communication can also negatively impact relationships between the University and external providers. For one, it may discourage placement providers from continuing their relationship with the University. This was demonstrated in student testimonies where students reported

that their supervisors were unclear as to why they had not received adequate guidance from the University.

## Student Testimony

*"I was completely exhausted, mentally and physically, and this had long-term effects on my mental health and my personal relationships as I was so burnt out. I felt because I was competent, I was given a very big caseload, which contributed to my burn out. I was treated as an extra employee."*

**– MDHS Student**

*"In some cases, may receive vague or unclear instructions about their responsibilities. This can lead to confusion and frustration as try to meet expectations."*

**– Engineering and IT Student**

*"I think a clearer guideline with more expectations we should have will be helpful."*

**– MDHS Student**

*"Extremely clear expectations which could be in the form of checklists."*

**– Education Student**

*"The communication between the university and the placement schools needs to be improved, so that the university know what they are sending paying university students into, not just throwing us into situations that we then have to scramble to make work for their requirements."*

**– Education Student**

*"We were told to wait for the placement to contact us to schedule our days to come into the school, even though we were given their contact details. When I didn't receive contact, I was told that the school was waiting for me to contact them. I seemed so unprofessional for listening to the uni's poor planning."*

**– Education Student**

*"The University was not very connected with my placement school, and did not speak to my mentor at all during visits, I understand my clinical specialist was probably rushed because they had many students to visit; however, even my mentor teacher commented on how odd it was."*

**– Education Student**

*“There were issues with the universities contact with the school, I wish they had let me know that the contact person at the placement school had left and that I would have a different contact, I had to sort that all out myself. Additionally, I wish the university had let us contact our mentor teachers earlier, it started my placement on a bad foot and I was frustrated feeling that I had made a bad first impression by listening to my university instructors.”*

**– Education Student**

*“Contacting the placement was difficult as the faculties system was out of date. Many of the placements no longer exist, or have moved, or have changed contact details.”*

**– Veterinary Science Student**

**Relevant Recommendations:**

**R10** Ensure the University is in consistent contact with providers, especially to inform learning expectations and to quickly resolve issues.

**R1** Ensure that faculties and Schools are collecting feedback from all students post-placement to identify and promote positively-reviewed providers.

**R11** Use student feedback data to assess values, skills and practices for potential provider models.

## Positive experiences of placement

Fortunately, this report also identified positive experiences students had on placement. The most significant of these were having a helpful and welcoming supervisors and gaining valuable experience that would be helpful when working in the field.

It is clear that students understand why placement is a necessary part of their education and the intrinsic benefits it provides. Unfortunately, negative experiences outweighed positive testimonies, suggesting that although some students know what a good placement entails, many are not experiencing it.

The positives identified in this report seem to be the result of good placement providers, rather than the University itself. This highlights the role of the University to ensure students are prepared and supported in their placements. An indicator of successful University improvement may be when, in subsequent surveys, the University's role is identified in positive experiences, rather than solely in critiques.

### Student Testimony

*"My mentor teacher was exceptional. I was respected and treated like a peer at every step of my placement, from making certain I had my breaks and lunches to supporting me during classroom challenges. She made herself available to me for discussion and always supported me in front of the students, even when I made errors. She was encouraging and welcoming from our first email and kind throughout the 4 weeks, even when I made mistakes."*

**– Education Student**

*"Excellent individual supervision (I had an excellent supervisor who was not UoM staff)."*

**– MDHS Student**

*"It was a really great learning experience to be able to learn 'on the job' and get real world clinical experience. Placements are where I learned the most!"*

**– MDHS Student**

*"Placement is engaging and I can definitely see how it will help prepare me for my career."*

**– MDHS Student**

*“My supervisor is very supportive and my placement is very related to my study and career goals.”*

**– Arts Student**

*“My supervisor was very helpful and caring.”*

**– MDHS Student**

## Recommendations

This report shows that issues raised by GSA in 2021 are still relevant and that considerable change needs to occur to ensure that students who undertake placements are adequately supported.

GSA recommends that the University:

1. **Ensure** that faculties and Schools are collecting feedback from all students post-placement to identify and promote positively-reviewed providers.
2. **Encourage** faculties and Schools to schedule regular information-sharing events where students can provide feedback and learn from their peers.
3. **Ensure** students are informed of appropriate reporting and support channels (e.g. – Safer Communities) prior to starting a placement.
4. **Ensure** relevant University policies (e.g. – the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy and Respect Action Plan) directly incorporate placement-specific information.
5. **Advocate** for paid placements with placement providers and government, so that students can be adequately supported to undertake placement.
6. **Find** and cover the cost of accommodation for students on rural or regional placements, especially if a rural/regional placement is compulsory.
7. **Ensure** that placements held in non-teaching periods are optional.
8. **Support** faculties and Schools to co-design placement preparation materials with students and/or GSA, to ensure they are relevant and useful.
9. **Ensure** placement preparation materials are delivered at least 3 weeks before a student commences their placement
10. **Ensure** the University is in consistent contact with providers, especially to inform learning expectations and quickly resolve issues.
11. **Use** student feedback data to assess values, skills and practices for potential provider models.

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