

STUDENT PROJECTS AT LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY A GUIDE FOR EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

The University is grateful for the opportunities External Organisations like yours can offer to students by providing real-world problems to be the subject of student projects. This document seeks to answer some of the common questions you may have around student projects and some of the contractual and legal issues associated with them.

If you have any questions, please do speak directly with the School you are dealing with.

Why might I support a student project?

You may already be working with Loughborough University on a research, teaching or enterprise activity or this might be your first opportunity to build a relationship with the University. Either way, working with students can be a valuable opportunity – personally and professionally.

Benefits to you in supporting a student project include:

- Talent spotting, to help future proof your workforce;
- Contributing to your corporate social responsibility agenda in providing quality learning opportunity for the next generation of professionals in your field;
- Opportunities to develop a closer working relationship with the University;
- Access to a pool of creative individuals who can provide ideas or inspiration for solutions to your live issues.

If you would like to explore other opportunities to work with the University, please contact one of our Partnership Development Managers via kt@lboro.ac.uk.

Why does the University include student project modules involving external organisations?

Benefits for the students:

- An opportunity to apply their learning in a practical way, to real world problems and develop valuable transferable skills;
- Gaining exposure to industry, building their professional network and exploring future opportunities;
- Providing examples of work to be included in their CV/Portfolio and enhancing their employability.

Benefits for the School and colleagues:

- A chance to create or further relationships with industry, which could lead to future work around teaching, research or enterprise matters;
- A potential contribution to positive course ratings.

The University's primary purpose in running student project modules is to enhance the student experience at Loughborough. They form part of the formal assessment of the students for the award of a degree and this remains the core reason for operating student projects. Occasionally, we run extra-curricular competitions to provide students with similar opportunities but not as part of their formal studies.

What is expected of me in supporting a student project?

The exact requirements vary across the University's Schools and the nature of the specialism.

The University asks all external organisations working on student projects to:

- Provide a problem informed by your business' actual operation, providing the student with an insight into your industrial landscape and real challenges;
- To remain engaged with and reasonably available to the student or students through the project;

- To communicate on a professional level with the students so they gain an insight into the culture within your industry;
- To provide feedback to the student and to the University on your experience during the project.

What is the relationship between the University, staff and students?

The relationship between the University, its staff (including academics) and students is often confusing for people from outside higher education and is important context for discussing confidentiality and intellectual property ownership (below).

In summary:

The **University** is a charity and holder of public funds and so takes its responsibilities in that regard very seriously. This includes ensuring its contractual exposure is limited appropriately.

University staff, including academic supervisors are employees of the University and under the University's direction. Their relationship with the University is governed by their terms and conditions of employment. When the University agrees to sign a contract, it binds the staff members too.

Students are, for legal purposes, entirely independent of the University. The University may not control or direct them in the same way it does its own employees. The University may not enter into legal obligations which are intended to bind the students and vice versa.

The University will not enter into three-party agreements with you and the student, save in exceptional circumstances. It is important to remember that students are independent of the University and the relationship is different to that between the University and staff.

Do we need to worry about confidentiality?

In the typical student project situation, the University would expect that sharing your confidential information could be avoided. If it is possible, we would ask that proposed student projects are of a non-confidential nature. The University believes this is beneficial for all parties.

Where it is necessary that some of your confidential data is provided to the students, there are a number of safeguards which can be put in place:

- You should consider anonymising any data or presenting it so as to render it not confidential or otherwise unlink it specifically from your company.
- You should work with the students to ensure that any reports or documents to be submitted to the University as part of the project should not contain confidential data or any such data should be disguised. This process should be arranged so as not to affect the students' ability to submit work to the University for assessment.

Where it is not possible for a student project to be non-confidential in nature nor for confidential information to be redacted from anything submitted to the University, the University will consider requests for NDAs:

- The need should be identified as soon as possible with the member of staff you are liaising with and the University's standard terms will be provided.
- It is absolutely essential that NDAs will provide for the student to agree with you a form of words or similar to enable them to discuss their experience in an employability context.
- It is essential that you clearly mark any confidential information as such before passing it to a student or member of University staff.

The University feels that to achieve the best outcomes for all parties, this approach is the least complex and time-consuming way forward when working on student projects.

What happens at the end of a project?

At the end of a project, the students will submit their project report or deliver any other project outputs to the University for assessment as part of their studies. This may involve sharing the project reports with external examiners. External examiners are contractors of the University and the terms of their engagement cover confidentiality in the documents they review.

The University will showcase the outputs of some or all of the student projects that have been completed, perhaps at an event or in printed or online media, to a variety of audiences.

Please ask your contact in the School you are dealing with to explain their practices around assessment and showcases.

Who owns the Intellectual Property in any of the outputs of the project?

As a starting point, students on taught programmes own the intellectual property (IP) they create. Students must be able to (1) submit their project report or other project outputs to the University for assessment and (2) include some information and examples of their work in their professional portfolio to support them in seeking employment opportunities in the future.

The position with group projects is more complex as each student involved will have some level of ownership over the outputs, but the balance of ownership can differ on a case by case basis. In any event, the ability to submit their report for assessment and showcase their work for employability purposes is essential.

Members of staff are not normally expected to contribute any new or existing IP to student projects – their role is supervisory. If staff input any IP into that process, the IP situation can become significantly more complicated, as IP created by University staff is owned by the University and existing IP may be owned by a third party.

The University's use of any IP arising is likely to be limited to showcasing the outputs of the project and the collaboration with you and for encouraging take up of a course or module. The lead member of University staff will discuss this with you in more detail.

If you wish to make use of the IP arising in the outputs of the student project for commercial purposes you will need to negotiate directly with the students as to the assignment or licensing of their rights. The University, on the basis that staff have performed a purely supervisory function, will not be a party to those discussions and is not in a position to facilitate this. You may like to secure personal contact details from the students directly to facilitate such discussions.

What happens after the module has finished or the students have left?

If you think you may wish to make contact with the students after the project module has finished, you may make contact with the University who will endeavour to pass your details on to the students. Please indicate this immediately upon module completion to ensure we still have contact with the students.