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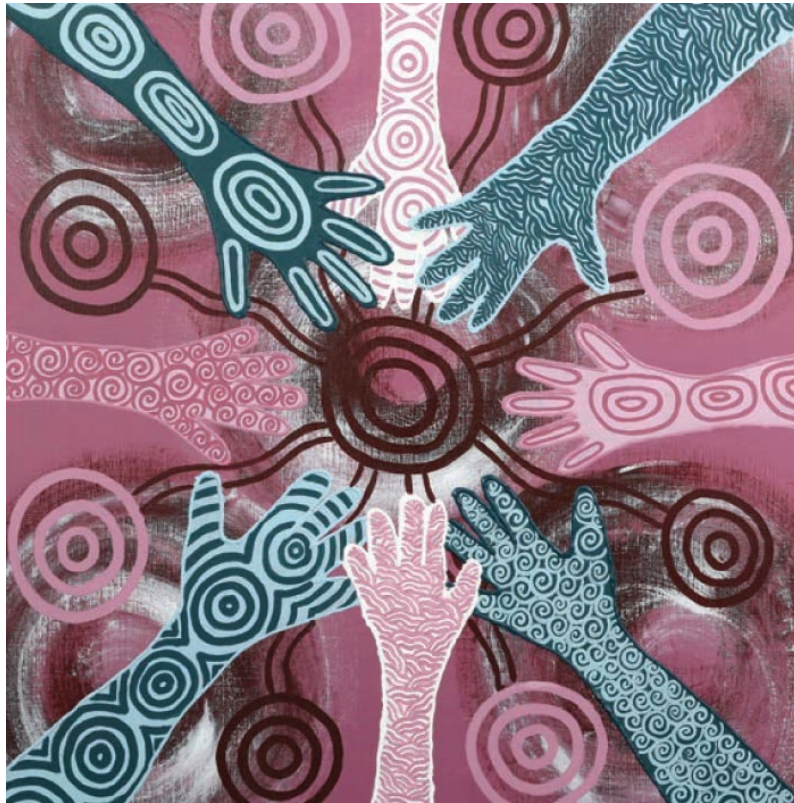
Social Work

Field Education Quick Guide



Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the Australian lands and waters where our staff and students live, learn and work. We honour the unique cultural and spiritual relationship to the land, waters and seas of First Australian peoples and their continuing and rich contribution to James Cook University (JCU) and Australian society. We also pay respect to ancestors and Elders past, present and future.



Kassandra Savage (JCU Alumni), 'Coming Together and Respecting Difference', acrylic on canvas, 2014, 90cm x 90cm.
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Introduction

This quick guide provides information about JCU social work field education and your role as either a Field Educator, Task Supervisor or Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO). Please familiarise yourself with the content before the student begins placement. If you have further questions, please contact the relevant staff listed below or refer to the Social Work Field Education Manual for comprehensive information about placement processes.

Many JCU staff are involved in social work field education. Their support and contact details are listed below.

JCU staff and support provided

Contact

The Student Placement Team (Placement Team):

These staff seek placement opportunities for social work students and other students from different disciplines. They email placement confirmations and information to students, host agencies, Field Educators, Task Supervisors and FELOs. The team also receives all completed assessment documents from FELOs at the end of placement.

placements@jcu.edu.au

07 4781 6333 (Townsville and Cairns)

The Academic Lead Field Education and the Field Education Coordinators:

These staff coordinate and oversee the placement subjects and the social work field education program. They assess and select host agencies, ensure that social work educational standards are maintained and consult with agencies and the JCU Social Work and Human Services Advisory Education Committee to update the program. Further, these staff organise training and resources for Field Educators, consult with FELOs and discuss the students' final grades with the Head of Social Work during examiner meetings.

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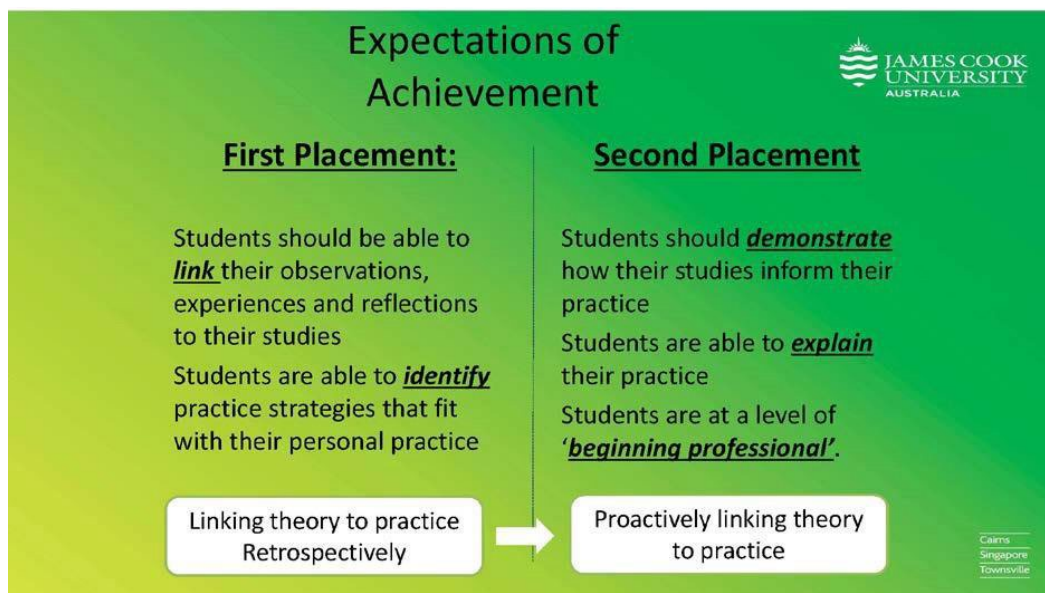
Where Field Education Fits in the Social Work Courses

Students complete two field education components, also called placement subjects, in the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Master of Social Work Professional Qualifying (MSW [PQ]) courses. These placement subjects are listed below.

- **BSW Field Education 1** occurs in the third year of the BSW course.
- **BSW Field Education 2** occurs in the final year of the BSW course.
- **MSW (PQ) Field Education 1** occurs in the first year (or in the second year, if the students start their course in the middle of the first year) of the MSW (PQ) course.
- **MSW (PQ) Advanced Social Work Practicum** occurs during the final year of the MSW (PQ) course.

The second placement (Field Education 2 and Advanced Social Work Practicum) occurs late in the BSW and MSW (PQ) course to ensure graduates are equipped with the skills they need to transition from study to social work practice. Figure 1 visualises the overarching expectations for student development across both placements.

Figure 1. Expectations of Student Achievement Across Both Placements



Learning Outcomes

All placement subjects ask students to complete learning outcomes. **Table 1** below presents an overview of the learning outcomes and their alignment with the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) [Practice Standards 2023](#).

The Structure of Placement

The regular duration for placement is 500 hours, which equates to approximately 14 weeks of placement full-time.

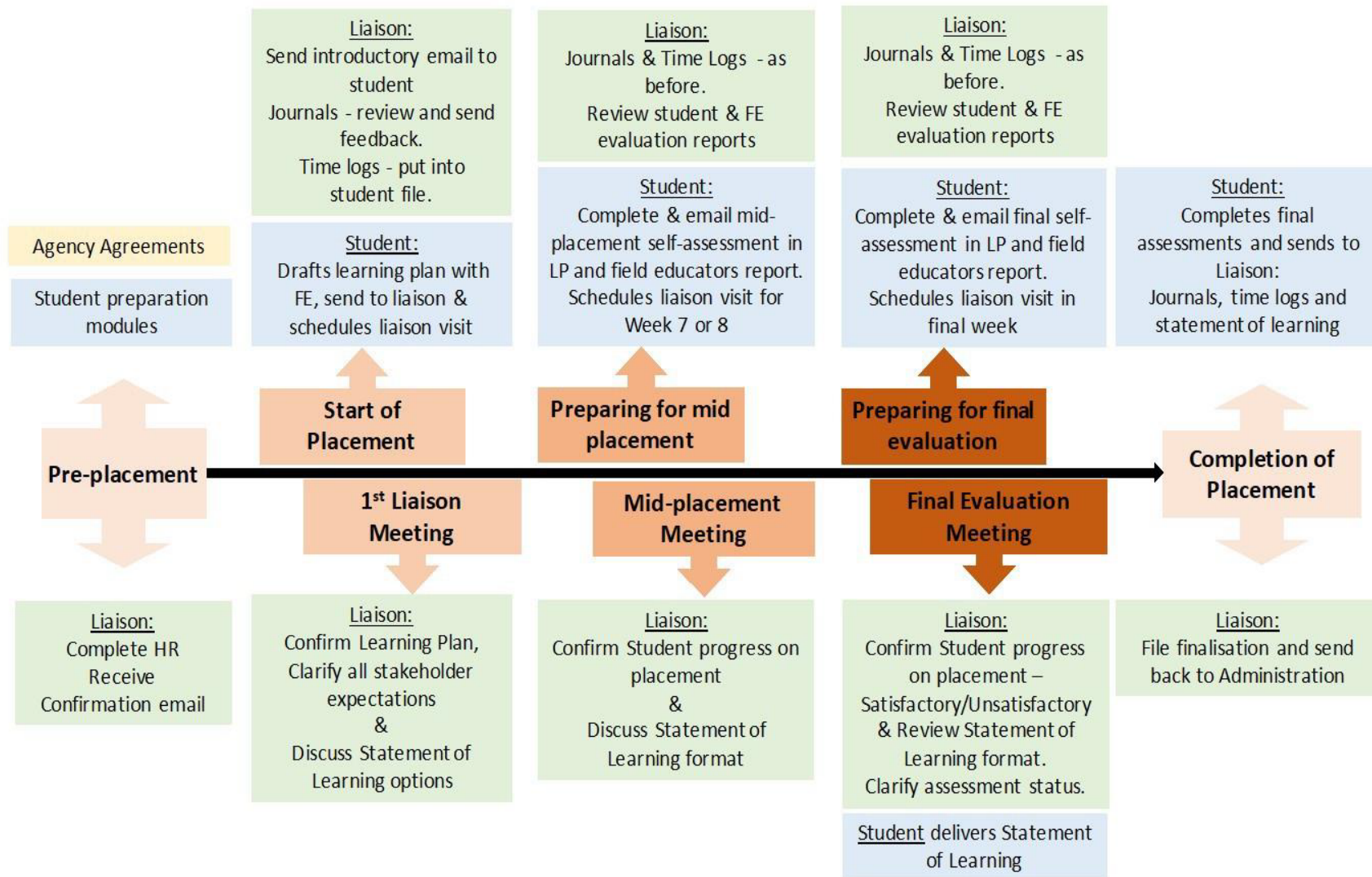
Each placement is guided by the student's Learning Plan. The student is responsible for preparing the document through consultation with the Field Educator, Task Supervisor (if applicable) and FELO. All placement stakeholders should meet at least three times throughout the placement to map the student's progress. These liaison meetings must be organised by the student (see **Figure 2** and the "Liaison Meetings" section below).

Table 1. The six learning outcomes for all placements and their connection with the nine AASW Practice Standards 2023

BSW and MSW(PQ) Field Education 1	BSW Field Education 2	MSW (PQ) Advanced Social Work Practicum	AASW Practice Standards 2023
<p>1. Demonstrate and apply knowledge of values, ethics and professionalism in daily social work practice</p>	<p>1. Demonstrate knowledge of and critically reflect on values, ethics and professionalism in daily social work practice</p>	<p>1. Synthesise knowledge of and critically reflect on values, ethics and professionalism in daily social work practice</p>	<p>Standard 1. Social workers conduct themselves according to the values, principles and guidelines of the AASW Code of Ethics 2020.</p>
<p>2. Describe and engage in culturally responsive and inclusive practice</p>	<p>2. Demonstrate and critically reflect on culturally responsive and inclusive practice</p>	<p>2. Demonstrate and critically reflect on culturally responsive and inclusive practice</p>	<p>Standard 2. Social workers practice in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to support their priorities and aspirations.</p> <p>Standard 4. Social workers practice respectfully and inclusively with regard to culture and diversity.</p>
<p>3. Explain social work theories, concepts, methods and techniques, and apply to practice</p>	<p>3. Analyse and synthesise social work theories, concepts, methods and techniques, and apply to practice</p>	<p>3. Evaluate social work theories, concepts, methods and techniques, and apply to research and practice</p>	<p>Standard 5. Social workers practice within a professional knowledge framework informed by a critical understanding of contemporary social work theory and research.</p>

BSW and MSW(PQ) Field Education 1	BSW Field Education 2	MSW (PQ) Advanced Social Work Practicum	AASW Practice Standards 2023
<p>4. Apply appropriate communication and interpersonal skills, informed by reflections on use of self</p>	<p>4. Apply effective communication and interpersonal skills, in a range of settings and contexts, informed by critical reflections on use of self</p>	<p>4. Apply advanced communication and interpersonal skills, in a range of settings and contexts, informed by critical reflections on use of self</p>	<p>Standard 3. Social workers advocate for policy initiatives and approaches to practice aimed at achieving fair and equitable access for people to social, health, economic, environmental and political resources.</p> <p>Standard 7. Social workers actively contribute to strengthening and promoting the identity and standing of the profession.</p>
<p>5. Implement information recording and sharing strategies</p>	<p>5. Implement advanced information recording and sharing strategies</p>	<p>5. Implement advanced information recording and sharing strategies</p>	<p>Standard 6. Social workers make professional decisions on the basis of a holistic assessment of the needs, strengths, goals and preferences of people.</p>
<p>6. Actively participate in professional development and supervision</p>	<p>6. Actively participate in professional development and supervision through critical reflection and research</p>	<p>6. Actively participate in professional development and supervision through critical reflection and research, in order to advance professional practice</p>	<p>Standard 8. Social workers build and strengthen their practice through regular structured supervision from social work qualified supervisors.</p> <p>Standard 9. Social workers monitor their skills, knowledge, and expertise to maintain, improve and broaden their professional development.</p>

Figure 2. Placement Timeline Including Stakeholder Responsibilities



Placement Stakeholders

All stakeholders are expected to keep regular contact and maintain respectful relationships that acknowledge the unique expertise, experience and contributions made to the student's learning. A description of each stakeholder's role and responsibilities is provided below.¹

Field Educators

Field Educators are qualified social workers with a minimum of two years of full-time practice experience or its part-time equivalent. Field Educators have the important task of maximising students' social work abilities through a supervisory process. This is achieved by providing support and guidance, in addition to clear feedback on the student's strengths and limitations.

Field Educators can be onsite or external supervisors. Both onsite and external Field Educators provide structured supervision within every 35 hours of placement, but a student with an external Field Educator is also supervised by one or more Task Supervisors.

Field Educators (and Task Supervisors, if applicable) are responsible for assessing the student's progress within the agency. Using their assessment, the Field Educator recommends the student's progress scores to the FELO, which indicates if the student has satisfactorily completed the placement.

The Field Educator's supervision may involve overviewing the student's strengths, limitations and scope for improving their practice. Moreover, the Field Educator ensures the student is:

- Placed in a favourable setting for developing their sound work habits and skills as a practitioner
- Acquainted with the agency's structure, procedures and personnel
- Provided with learning opportunities to further integrate into the agency and community
- Informed of exemplary personal and professional standards of practice
- Ready to complete the Learning Plan in the first two to three weeks of placement
- Engaged in a progression of various tasks and learning activities
- Familiar with the broader social issues relevant to their practice
- Involved in the mid-placement and end-of-placement assessment
- Ready to complete all written assessments before the liaison meetings
- Provided with emergency access to another Field Educator if needed.

Task Supervisors

In some agencies, students will have one or more day-to-day Task Supervisors and an external Field Educator. Task Supervisors work in conjunction with the external Field Educator, the student and FELO to help the student develop the knowledge and skills necessary for effective social work practice. Each Task Supervisor supports and guides the student based on their professional experience and expertise. Specifically, Task Supervisors use their role at the agency to help the student with day-to-day placement tasks.

¹ Students are also placement stakeholders. Please see the Social Work Field Education Manual for information about the student's role and responsibilities.

The Task Supervisor's role is similar to Field Educators, yet they do not provide qualified social work supervision. Task Supervisors:

- Arrange work settings that are conducive to developing the student's sound work habits and skills as a practitioner in the field
- Supervise the student as they perform day-to-day tasks in the agency
- Give the student a perspective of the agency's structure, procedures and personnel
- Provide tasks and learning opportunities for the student to further integrate with the agency and community
- Offer a progression of varied tasks and learning activities
- Help the student prepare their Learning Plan in the first three weeks of placement
- Prepare, or provide feedback when the Field Educator prepares, the mid-placement and end-of-placement assessments; this feedback may include the student's performance with placement tasks and integration with the agency
- Review and debrief with all stakeholders when necessary.

Field Education Liaison Officers (FELOs)

FELOs are JCU staff who maintain communication with placement stakeholders. FELOs ensure that each student's placement provides opportunities for them to become an effective social work practitioner. In addition to this, FELOs:

- Assist with assessment requirements such as finalising the Learning Plan
- Check on the student's progress with the Field Educator and Task Supervisor (if applicable), and promptly address any concerns raised by stakeholders
- Monitor the placement to ensure it meets the AASW standards (AASW, 2023a, 2023b)
- Assist Field Educators and Task Supervisors (if applicable) in their development as supervisors and social work practitioners as required
- Recommend the student's final grade to a Field Education Coordinator based on their interaction with the student, the Field Educator or Task Supervisor assessments and feedback from stakeholders (see the "Recommending a Final Grade" section below).

Liaison Meetings

Students meet the FELO, Field Educator and Task Supervisors (if applicable) on at least three occasions during their placement. These occasions are the first, second and third liaison meetings, which are assigned for all stakeholders to discuss the student's Learning Plan, mid-placement assessment and end-of-placement assessment, respectively. The liaison meetings may involve in-person discussions, phone conversations or other online contact by using Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

The primary liaison meeting aims are to:

- Clarify stakeholder expectations and finalise the Learning Plan (first liaison meeting)
- Review the student's progress with their learning outcomes while using the Field Educator (or Task Supervisor) Assessment Forms and the Student Self-Assessment Form (second and third liaison meetings)
- Facilitate other assessment tasks, such as the final placement presentation.

A Suggested Format for Liaison Meetings

Students give an overview of their placement by discussing the agency, tasks they have undertaken, project work they have completed, client contact they have experienced and other learning experiences. This needs to be done with direct reference to the completed Student Self-Assessment Form and the learning outcomes in the Learning Plan.

Field Educators and Task Supervisors (if applicable) then share their perception of the student's progress while identifying the student's strengths and areas for improving their professional practice. These topics will likely reference the student's self-assessment, and the progress scores and comments written in the Field Educator (or Task Supervisor) Assessment Form.

After hearing these stakeholders' input, the FELO will reflect on the key points raised and consider if the placement is meeting AASW standards. For example, the FELO may identify if learning outcomes or areas of social work practice have not been addressed.

The FELO, Field Educator and Task Supervisor (if applicable) are then responsible for assessing the student's levels of perceived competence by indicating the student's progress score and final grade. These decisions should be collaboratively approached with shared respect and transparency. If there is a discrepancy between stakeholder assessments despite attempted negotiations, a Field Education Coordinator may be invited to help find a resolution.

Ensuring the Quality of Liaison Meetings

Liaison meetings are important. If there are concerns that the liaison meetings are not adequate, the following steps should be taken:

1. The concerned stakeholder(s) should discuss the situation with all stakeholders and agree on future liaison processes.
2. If one or more stakeholders have continuing concerns, they should notify a Field Education Coordinator.
3. A Field Education Coordinator will then meet with all stakeholders to discuss the liaison meetings and negotiate an agreement for future liaison processes.

Recommending a Final Grade

Assessment processes start when the student completes their pre-placement requirements, and the processes continue throughout the placement period. Alongside assessing competence in the areas of practice, theory and skills, the student is also evaluated for their:

- use of self
- sensitivity to others
- ability to take initiative
- commitment to practice
- adherence to, and respect for, agency policy
- propensity for responsible action-taking
- demonstrated ability to adhere to the AASW Practice Standards 2023 and the [Code of Ethics 2020](#).

The student's successful completion of their placement subject will be determined by the stakeholders' discussions during the liaison meetings, the student's participation in integration sessions facilitated by a Subject Coordinator for the placement subject and the documents that the FELO submits with their FELO checklist (see below).

PLEASE NOTE: The assessment items can change from time to time. For updated information, FELOs can refer to the student's placement subject outline.

The FELO's Role in Assessing the Student's Progress on Placement

During the second and third liaison meetings, the FELO discusses the student's self-assessment and the additional feedback, progress scores and overall progress score (i.e., the final grade) selected by the Field Educator or Task Supervisor in their Assessment Forms. The FELO uses this information to recommend a grade to a Field Education Coordinator.

The FELO is responsible for collecting, reviewing and submitting all placement documents specified in the FELO Checklist provided by the Placement Team. These documents, including the Learning Plan, Student Self-Assessment Forms, Field Educator (or Task Supervisor) Assessment Forms, signed Timesheets and FELO Checklist, are submitted to the Placement Team. The student's journal entries, project reflections, placement presentations, statements of learning or placement reports are **not** submitted, but the FELO must confirm that the student completed these assessment tasks.

Only students who demonstrate competent performance commensurate with their year level will be given a satisfactory grade. If a grade is unsatisfactory, Field Education Coordinators will review the student's placement documentation and decide if they should have another attempt at placement or if they need to re-enrol in the placement subject at a later date. This decision will be informed by feedback from the FELO and [JCU policy](#).

Managing Challenges on Placement

Initial Protocol

At times, challenges can arise between one or more stakeholders. It is important that stakeholders resist the temptation to deny, overlook or avoid these challenges. If addressed early, the stakeholders may have a better chance of overcoming any challenges. Stakeholders are encouraged to follow the protocols outlined below:

1. Promptly discuss the challenge with relevant stakeholders, and if relevant, another JCU Social Work and Human Services staff member.
2. If the student and Field Educator (or Task Supervisor, if applicable) are experiencing the challenge and cannot reach a resolution, they should inform the FELO and decide if a formal meeting is required.
3. If required, the FELO should immediately arrange a formal meeting. A Field Education Coordinator or the Academic Lead Field Education may also be involved if the FELO believes that additional support is necessary.

Challenges Related to the Student's Progress

Challenges might include the student's inadequate progress with their learning, or conflict between the Field Educator (or Task Supervisor, if applicable) and the student that threatens the placement's progress.

Field Educators and Task Supervisors should inform the student and FELO in advance if these challenges occur. If necessary, an early meeting with all stakeholders should be arranged to review the student's situation. A Field Education Coordinator can provide overall support and information, and they can attend the meeting if requested. During the meeting, the FELO will write an action plan, place the plan on the student's file and distribute a copy to all stakeholders. The following questions should be discussed to devise the action plan:

- What are the areas of concern?
- What is the evidence?
- What needs to change?
- What is the plan of action and timeframe for change?
- How will the student be supported while improving their progress?
- When will the progress be reviewed?

Placement Breakdown

A potential placement breakdown often portrays a complex situation, which requires a considerate approach. Please see Chapter 6 of the Social Work Field Education Manual for a detailed protocol to guide your approach.

Discrimination and Harassment

Placements are guided by [JCU policy and procedures](#) on bullying, discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct.

Frequently Asked Questions

These questions and answers may help to clarify any queries you might have. If you need further information or have a question that is not listed, please contact the Placement Team, the Academic Lead Field Education or a Field Education Coordinator (see contact details in the "Introduction" section).

1. What email address should the FELO use to communicate with the student and agency?

Please use your provided JCU email address for any email communication regarding your FELO role and responsibilities.

2. What is required at the liaison meetings?

In general, the student should organise the meeting time and collate an agenda for each meeting. During the first liaison meeting, the Learning Plan, including each stakeholder's role and expectations, are discussed before the document is finalised and signed.

During the second and third liaison meetings, it is important to check how the placement is going and whether the placement is at a satisfactory level. The student's learning outcomes or additional learning needs should be identified and discussed.

3. What should be covered in the Learning Plan?

Learning Plans should be organised around the AASW Practice Standards 2023 and the learning outcomes presented in the student's subject outline. Generally, the student and Field Educator (and Task Supervisor, if applicable) should consider how the Learning Plans are relevant to the agency, and the document should be reviewed by the FELO.

4. What should the FELO be looking for when reviewing Learning Plans?

Helpful questions include:

- Are the student's learning goals congruent with the AASW Practice Standards?
- Is it likely that the student can achieve these goals in the agency?
- Is there a link between practical learning and theoretical understanding?
- Are the monitoring methods and strategies to achieve learning goals relevant to the learning outcomes?
- Are the stakeholders' expectations appropriate, and do they align with requirements for frequent supervision?
- Are the suggested monitoring methods and strategies conducive to attaining the stated learning goals?

5. How many integration sessions do students attend and are these considered part of placement time?

Three integration sessions, which are two-hour online or in-person peer-group workshops, are held at different times of the student's placement. Before these sessions, students complete set reading tasks listed in their subject outline. Up to 15 hours of the integration activities can be logged as the student's placement time, but this time varies depending on the intensity of each integration session and the student's engagement with the content.

6. What placement information needs to be collected, and when should this information be passed on to the Placement Team?

The information listed on the FELO's Checklist (see "Recommending a Final Grade" above) includes:

- The finalised Learning Plan
- The student's Mid-Placement Self-Assessment Form
- The Field Educator's (or Task Supervisor's) Mid-Placement Assessment Form
- The student's End-of-Placement Self-Assessment Form
- The Field Educator's (or Task Supervisor's) End-of-Placement Assessment Form
- Confirmation that the student completed their placement presentation
- Confirmation that the three journal entries or project reflections were received
- All signed timesheets.

7. What if the Learning Plans or other documentation are not sent within the requested timeframe?

The student is responsible for submitting the necessary documents to the FELO. Please clarify the expected timeframes during the first liaison meeting. If the FELO does not receive the documentation on time, they should follow up with the student via email or phone. However, if the student does not respond to several contact attempts, the FELO should refer the matter back to the Placement Team.

8. Who is checking the timesheets for accuracy?

The student logs their time using their Timesheets document to show the progressive totals of time spent on placement and the tasks they completed (e.g., research or library time). Each weekly timesheet must be signed by the student and then checked and signed by the Field Educator or Task Supervisor.

These timesheets are Excel spreadsheets designed to add up the hours automatically. If the timesheets are accepted in another format, or information is entered in ways that stop the automatic total, the FELO needs to check that the total hours have been correctly calculated and that the timesheets are signed.

9. What assessment pieces require feedback from the FELO?

The FELO collaboratively works with the student and the Field Educator and Task Supervisor (if applicable) to review and provide feedback on the Learning Plan and Student Self-Assessment Forms during liaison meetings.

Further, the FELO reads and provides feedback on the student's three journal entries or project reflections. If this written assessment is not critically reflective or up to a professional standard as specified in the subject outline, the FELO will ask the student to re-write and re-submit the assessment.

Finally, the FELO witnesses the student's placement presentation during the third liaison meeting. After the presentation, the FELO provides the student with direct feedback. If the placement is incomplete or unsatisfactory, the FELO asks the student to complete additional work (see Chapter 10 in the Social Work Field Education Manual).

10. How should the FELO provide feedback on journal entries or project reflections?

The student's journal entries and project reflections are personal, reflective, analytical and confidential exchanges with the FELO, and occasionally a Field Education Coordinator. When responding to this written assessment, FELOs must consider if the

students use the process to make sense of their work in light of their personal and professional practice framework.

Feedback should include encouraging comments that foster the student's critical thought and conscious experience of learning, rather than just descriptive accounts. These comments can prompt students to extend their reflections by engaging in further reflection, study or practice. Comments should help the students focus on their strengths and identify new areas of learning.

FELOs can approach feedback by focusing on at least one important point for each journal entry and then briefly acknowledging other points.

11. How can students use research time?

Students spend research time (also called library time) searching for and reading information relevant to the placement, the agency and their learning goals identified in the Learning Plan. For example, a student might research a particular theoretical approach relevant to the agency, such as motivational interviews, narrative therapy or community development. Alternatively, they might find information relevant to a client group, such as statistics or general mental health resources, or they might research a challenge the agency is experiencing.

Students are entitled to up to four hours of research time a week (pro-rata for part-time placements), but they should discuss when and how this time is used with the Field Educator or Task Supervisor (if applicable). Research time cannot be "saved up" and taken as a block. If it is not used during the current week, it is lost.

12. What is the FELO's role regarding the final grade?

The FELO recommends a grade of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory to a Field Education Coordinator (based on the Field Educator's and/or Task Supervisor's recommendation and the student's work). However, it is important to consider this as a collaborative, transparent process for all stakeholders to reach a final decision. Should there be differences in opinion, it is important to discuss this while considering all stakeholders' views. In the first liaison meeting, please ensure that all stakeholders clearly understand the importance of early notice should any difficulties or performance issues arise.

13. How does the FELO return the student's documents to the Placement Team?

Please complete the FELO Checklist, sign the form and attach the required documents specified in the form before submitting via email (placements@jcu.edu.au).

