

Department of Social Work & Human Services

Making Work Based Placements Work



A guide for students undertaking

WS3503/ WS5303 Field Education 1 or WS4504/ WS5604
Field Education 2

CRICOS Provider Code: 00117J

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The context of the Work Based Placement Experience

Field Education is an important component of social work education. Field education is an academic subject that allows students to integrate what they have learnt in theory in practice. Generally is an unpaid activity that is supported by supervisors in the field and academic staff. The AASW allows for students to do their field education in their workplace when certain conditions are met. Importantly this has to be around new learning, thus student wanting to undertake a placement in a workplace need to be able to demonstrate that they are in a new role that will allow them to achieve the learning objectives of field education through engagement with new learning.

The field education unit will not be able to find paid placements for students, however, will endeavour to explore with students the possibility of student completing their placement in a workplace if they have just started a new position or role. Students need to provide evidence, such as job description to show the relevance of the role to social work practice and the newness of this learning opportunity to them.

Before embarking on the journey of work based the following context has to be considered, can the field education goals and objectives be achieved in this placement, does this placement meet the AASW requirements and will the workplace be supportive of the student as a learner?

Field Education Goals

The primary Field Education goals are as follows:

- To provide students with opportunities to;
 - develop and / or widen their experience,
 - broaden their knowledge base,
 - be exposed to new practice experiences, and
 - develop a greater understanding of social work through formal supervisory arrangements.
- To enable students to learn how the agency functions, experimenting with a variety of interventions within the organisational mandate.
- To give students an opportunity to demonstrate their levels of competence or expertise, to show evidence of action based on reflection and to identify areas of further personal and professional learning.
- To assist students to use their personal resources effectively, enabling the student to grow into the role of a social worker.
- To help students understand how their own personalities, values and experiences influence their perceptions of self and others, shaping their responses to policy and practice.
- To provide students with supervision matched to their learning needs, as well as providing students with a model of supervision for the future.

- To provide students with the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills acquired on the course to the realities of social work practice.

Field Education Objectives

The Field Education Objectives are reflective of the AASW practice Standards for social work practitioners. Students' learning in field education is practice based and in the context of each particular field of practice and human service organisation as well as the practice standards for the profession.

Field Education Objectives

Social Work Practice Standard	First placement	Second placement
1. To participate in direct social work practice.	1.Begin to identify appropriate methods of intervention, describe their theoretical underpinnings and critically reflect on their effectiveness in addressing service user needs	1.Demonstrate an ability to identify and apply appropriate methods of intervention, describe their theoretical underpinnings and critically reflect on their effectiveness in addressing service user needs
2.To gain an understanding of social work service delivery that meets client needs, organizational goals and community expectations	2.Develop an understanding of social welfare organisations and critically reflect on how service delivery is framed to meet client needs, organizational goals and community expectations	2.Demonstrate a capacity to describe and analyse how organisations are able to address and meet client needs, organizational goals and community expectations
3.To gain an understanding of social work practice in the context of the organization and the societal structures	3.Develop an understanding of major social, political and economic factors and their impact on agencies and shaping policy and practice	3.Demonstrate the ability to identify major social, political and economic factors and their impact on agencies and shaping policy and practice
4. To reflect on policies and practices and their impact on clients.	4.Develop a process of reflective practice that considers the impact of policies and practice paradigms on practice intervention and client groups	4.Demonstrate an ability to reflect on and articulate the impact of policies and practice paradigms on practice intervention and client groups and integrate reflective practice in the implementation of service delivery
5. To consider relevant research in the light of clients' needs, organizational goals and social policy	5.Engage in and/or be able to identify appropriate research activities that could inform and/or enhance professional	5.Demonstrate an ability to engage in research activities that could inform and/or enhance professional practice in the light of clients' needs, organisational goals and social policy

	practice in the light of clients' needs, organizational goals and social policy	
6. To engage in the process of continuing education and reflective practice with the view of developing an ethical practice model.	6. Develop a method for identifying and/or engaging in continuing education and reflective practice with the view of developing an ethical practice model.	6. Demonstrate an ability to identify and engage in the process of continuing education and reflective practice that informs professional and ethical practice model.
	7. Provide an opportunity (for both the individual student and the Department of Social Work) to test suitability for entry into the Social Work profession.	7. Demonstrate the ability to practice as an entry level professional social work practitioner.

Placements in Students' Place of Employment

"1) In order to provide a breadth of experience and to prevent conflicts of interest between employment and education roles, field education placements will be undertaken in a different context, organisation and field of practice to the student's place of employment.

2) This requirement may be waived for one placement only if the SWAOU is satisfied that all other principles and policies set out in this document can be met." AASW (2012) Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (p8) (see Appendix 1)

A field placement is significantly different from paid employment. The central point of the placement is to enable a student to pursue learning objectives relevant to social work rather than simply getting through agency work. The placement process should be a time of experimentation and analysis of how one intervenes and what outcomes are possible/likely.

Before any student commences a workplace placement, special attention must be paid to:

1. clarifying the goals of the placement
2. determining the learning opportunities that will be available, and
3. determining the educational processes that will be used,
4. ensuring that the student is allocated learning experiences not involving their routine work responsibilities,
5. ensuring that while undertaking placement they should not carry any other workload,
6. ensuring as far as possible that the field educator is not the worker who is the student's usual supervisor.

7. A Contract is required for any work-based placement – see attached example (*Appendix No 2*).

Ideas for making work based placements work

Before entering a work based placement set-up it would be useful to consider some of the challenges these set-up may pose:

If you have negotiated a part-time placement in your usual workplace, recognising that your placements means you are taking on a new role there sometimes on placement there can be confusion about what is expected of both roles (hours, workload, learning goals) we suggest that this is discussed before placement and reviewed throughout.

Consider:

- **Define your roles - what is expected of you as a student and as an employer: reflect, discuss, record and... review**
- **How does my workload reflect my needs as a learner?**
- **Discuss the role of the student as learner with the supervisor and line manager**
- **Regular Supervision focused on learning not just tasks**
- **Ensuring self-care by reflecting on strategies and implementing these**
- **Considering the professional development opportunity of the student placement: reflections and conversations with the organisation**
- **Considering the opportunities a student in a new role can offer to the organisations/ how can this potential can be harvested to value add to the agencies goals and vision: reflections and conversations**
- **Regular contact with your liaison person**
- **Put a review of how this is going on the agenda for liaison contacts**
- **Go into a new space for the new role you are taking on: is there a another desk, room or pod**
- **Consider in early discussions how student and supervisor will negotiate current relationships: Is your supervisor your colleague? From another team? Does this impact? What happens when there is conflict? What about confidentiality?**

Note : Only one placement may be taken in the student's workplace

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

AASW (2012) AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND ACCREDITATION STANDARDS.

Field Education

Field education is a core component of the social work education process, and has the status of a full academic subject. It is a key activity for the student, providing opportunities to integrate content from classroom learning with practical experience, whilst at the same time developing competence in a range of social work skills. It demands collaborative effort between school and agency staff and students, and may be enhanced by the maintenance of strong links with local AASW branches. Contemporary workplace conditions give rise to both the need and the opportunity to develop creative and innovative field education placements. However, in all field placements, procedures must exist to ensure the promotion of rigorous academic and practice standards.

i) Field education arrangements

The centrality of field education to the student's learning and socialisation process should be reflected in the organisation of field education subjects within social work schools. There should be clear connections between the academic and research pursuits of university staff members, and field education experiences offered by the school. This may be achieved in a number of ways, including the participation of all social work members of staff in both field education and classroom teaching. Persons responsible for the management of the field education program must be social workers.

ii) School responsibilities

Acknowledging the centrality of field education implies the recognition by the school of the major contribution made to social work education by practitioners, and by the agencies which employ them. In arranging placements, university staff must involve the agency, the field teacher and the student in a consultative process, and must ensure that the learning opportunities offered by the agency will make it possible for the student to achieve the identified learning goals. Schools must also offer support to their field educators in the form of consultation and access to university resources, as field educators do not receive direct remuneration from the school.

The school will arrange for a member of its staff (including sessional or delegated staff) to visit the agency at least once, and preferably twice during the placement to provide liaison between the two organisations, to provide consultation as required, and to assist in evaluation of the student's progress. Telephone and/or video contact may be used to supplement site visits, but will not entirely replace them.

iii) Length and breadth of placements

Students must spend a minimum of 1000 hours spread over at least two field placements. No placement can be less than 280 hours. Placements must be structured in such a way that the educational goals can be achieved. The most usual patterns for achieving this are via full-time ('block') placements, or by concurrent placements that will be of at least

two days per week. Students must undertake placements in at least two practice settings and in at least two fields of practice and be able to practise using a diverse range of social work interventions. If students are granted part-time placement, they have to at least do 2 full-time weeks in that placement as well.

Field education placements must be taken over two years in conjunction with the professional social work program of study. No placement will be an observation placement.

iv) Qualifications and responsibilities of field educators

Field educators will be qualified social workers with a minimum of two years' full-time practice experience, or its part-time equivalent, who demonstrate a commitment to continuing professional education, and an interest in developing social work knowledge and skills. Their workloads must be such that they are able to provide the formal and informal supervision needed by their social work students. There should be a minimum of at least two hours supervision (possibly one formal and one informal) for each five days (35 hours) of field placement. This may be given individually, or in a group if the agency has more than one student.

v) Location of field placements

Field placements are usually offered in agencies that employ social workers, and are supervised by experienced social workers. However, valuable learning experiences are increasingly available in agencies that do not employ social workers, or where qualified social workers are not available to provide on-site supervision.

If a student is placed in a setting where such conditions pertain, arrangements must be made to ensure that appropriate social work socialisation and supervision takes place, and that the learning objectives specified for the subject are achieved. Such arrangements will include the school making appropriate contractual arrangement with an external social worker to ensure that social work supervision takes place regularly, and that social work outcomes can be demonstrated by the student.

vi) Placements undertaken overseas

Although at least 50 per cent (500hours) of the field education requirements must be taken in Australia, students may undertake one of the remaining placements overseas. In cases where placements are arranged overseas, the university must be able to demonstrate that all the usual standards, criteria and responsibilities related to field education, as specified in Section 6 of the AASW's document Policy and Procedures for Establishing Eligibility for Membership of the AASW, have been met.

Placement in overseas locations will only be considered in the final year of your degree. Because of the many factors that need to be taken into consideration it is essential that the students discuss any plans with the Field Education Co-ordinator at least six months minimum before the commencement of placement.

Factors to be considered include a valid passport with appropriate visa's, insurance, health insurance, full immunisation, safety factors in the country of choice, an appropriate safe practice setting with professional social work supervision.

Students contemplating an overseas placement need to also have the finance to pay for airfares and living expenses while overseas. The Department of Social Work and Community Welfare do not have the resources to provide any financial support.

vi) Field education in the student's place of employment

In order to provide a breadth of experience, placements will be undertaken in a setting and agency different from the student's place of employment. This requirement may be waived for one placement if the school is satisfied that the student's learning goals can be achieved in the student's place of employment.

Before a student commences a workplace placement, special attention must be paid to clarifying the goals of the placement and to determining the learning opportunities that will be available, and the educational processes that will be used. The student must be allocated learning experiences not involving the individual's routine work responsibilities, and whilst undertaking placement should not carry any other workload. The field educator should be a worker who is not the usual supervisor.

"3) If a placement is undertaken in a student's place of work, a written agreement signed by the organisation, the SWAOU and the student will be completed. All parties will agree to:

- a) agreement that the employee is in a student role while on placement and that the student is able to meet the educational requirements, principles and policies set out in this document*
- b) allocation of learning experiences not involving the student's routine work responsibilities, including details of the differentiation between learning goals and usual employment duties*
- c) protected time while on placement that is separate from the duties carried out at work and includes time to complete reading, reflective learning and assessment activities related to the placement*
- d) specification of how the criteria outlined in this document for field education are met*
- e) specification for how the placement will be monitored to ensure that the criteria will be met*
- f) that wherever practicable, the supervisor is not the student's line manager or usual supervisor."* AASW (212, p.8)

viii) Planning and assessment of field placements

The school must articulate clear learning goals and objectives for each field placement, and clearly state the expected standards of performance to be reached by students in each placement. A learning plan must be developed for each placement, indicating how the student will meet the required goals and objectives.

Methods of assessing field performance should respect and promote academic rigour. A variety of assessment methods and techniques may be used to assess a student's field performance. These should be identified at the commencement of each placement, and

should be understood and agreed to by school, field educator and student. The assessment process should include contributions from all parties involved in the student's placement and should be carried out in an equitable and collaborative manner.

The final decision about whether the student has achieved the identified educational outcomes and has passed the field education subject is to be made by the school after consideration of material submitted by all parties.

AASW (2012) Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards.

A copy of this document can be accessed through the AASW website or the following link <https://www.aasw.asn.au/careers-study/education-standards-accreditation>

APPENDIX 2

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND HUMAN SERVICES JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY

BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK OR MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK (PROFESSIONAL QUALIFYING)

WS3503, WS5503, WS4504, WS5604
(please circle as applicable)

AGREEMENT BETWEEN AN AGENCY and JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY IN RELATION TO A WORK-BASED PLACEMENT on behalf of:

Name of Student:

Student ID No:

Degree Studying: BSW or MSW (PQ) (please circle)

Name of Agency:

Office Address:

Agency Phone Number:

Name of Manager / Committee of Management (COM) Representative(s):

Placement dates:

I/we, the undersigned, agree that whilst _____ is employed by _____ agency, I/we support his/her student role and learning needs as set down by the AASW for the period of the placement outlined above. The learning environment will include:

AASW requirements that need to be met	How is this going to be met
Regular weekly supervision of at least 1 hour duration	
Regular attention to and review of identified learning goals	
Time allocated as part of usual duties to do a daily reflective journal (of at least 30 minutes a day)	
Library time each week (approx 4 hrs)	
Allocation of learning experiences not involving the student's routine work responsibilities	
Time allocated as part of usual duties to attend the required university integration sessions for the placement subject, or time to do the alternative learning tasks as set on LearnJCU for externally enrolled students	

Staff/ team willingness to support the student as a student as well as a fellow worker	
Provision of a field educator who is not the student's line manager or usual supervisor	

In the event of difficulties on placement, we agree to follow the guidelines as set down in Chapter 6 of the Field Education Manual.

We have discussed the dual roles of 'student and paid worker' and these are specific strategies we will put in place to support the learning experience:

Signed:

Agency Manager / COM

Student

Field Education Co-ordinator

Date:

Date:

Date: