

# Social Work & Human Services

## Making Work-Based Placements Work



### A guide for students undertaking

WS3504/ WS5303 Field Education 1 or  
WS4504 (Field Education 2)/ WS5605 (Advanced practicum)  
CRICOS Provider Code: 00117J

#### Contents

|  |   |
|--|---|
| The context of the Work Based Placement Experience ..... | 2 |
| Field Education Goals .....                              | 2 |
| Field Education Objectives.....                          | 3 |
| Placements in Students' Place of Employment.....         | 4 |
| Ideas for making work based placements work.....         | 5 |
| Appendix 1- Work-based placement contract .....          | 6 |

## **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 (2013) 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.

| WS3503/<br>WS5303  | WS4504   | WS5605   | Corresponding AASW<br>2013) Practice Standard                  |
|--|--|--|--|
| 1. Demonstrate and apply knowledge of values, ethics and professionalism in daily social work practice | 1. Demonstrate knowledge of and critically reflect on values, ethics and professionalism in daily social work practice                           | 1. Synthesise knowledge of and critically reflect on values, ethics and professionalism in daily social work practice                          | 1. Values and ethics<br>2. Professionalism                     |
| 2. Describe and engage in culturally responsive and inclusive practice                                 | 2. Demonstrate and critically reflect on culturally responsive and inclusive practice  | 2. Demonstrate and critically reflect on culturally responsive and inclusive practice  | 3. Culturally responsive and inclusive practice                |
| 3. Explain social work theories, concepts, methods and techniques, and apply to practice               | 3. Analyse and synthesise social work theories, concepts, methods and techniques, and apply to practice agencies and shaping policy and practice | 3. Evaluate social work theories, concepts, methods and techniques, and apply to research and practice   | 4. Knowledge for practice<br>5. Applying knowledge to practice |
| 4. Apply appropriate communication and interpersonal skills, informed by reflections on use of self    | 4. Apply effective communication and interpersonal skills, in a range of settings and contexts, informed by critical reflections on use of self  | 4. Apply advanced communication and interpersonal skills, in a range of settings and contexts, informed by critical reflections on use of self | 6. Communication and interpersonal skills                      |
| 5. Implement information recording and sharing strategies  | 5. Implement advanced information recording and sharing strategies   | 5. Implement advanced information recording and sharing strategies   | 7. Information recording and sharing                           |
| 6. Actively participate in professional development  | 6. Actively participate in professional development and supervision through  | 6. Actively participate in professional development and supervision through  | 6. Communication and interpersonal skills                      |

|                  |                                   |  |   |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| and supervision. | critical reflection and research. | critical reflection and research, in order to advance professional practice. | 8. Professional development and supervision |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|

## Placements in Students' Place of Employment

The AASW (2020) Australian Social Work Accreditation Standards outline the following guidelines for Work-based field education placements

“9.1 A student will undertake no more than one field education placement in their place of employment.

9.2 The prerequisite for granting a work-based placement is a written agreement between the HEP, the student and the employer. The signatory on behalf of the employer must not be the student’s immediate manager. Senior management confirmation is required to ensure the employing organisation’s willingness to commit resources to the student’s placement.

9.3 The HEP must recognise and inform students that work-based placements are at the discretion of the employer.

9.4 The employer must agree that:

- The student is located in a work setting away from their normal employment setting
- Their student status will be protected and they will not be expected to meet normal work commitments as an employee of the organisation when undertaking their placement hours.

9.5 Attendance and learning requirements for students on placement in their workplace are the same as those required of other students.

9.6 Where the Field Educator is known to the student, the HEP must ensure that processes are in place to manage potential conflicts of interest.” (AASW, 2020, pp.33-34).

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

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 that these are suitable to achieving the placement objective (see above), 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 Appendix 1.

## **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?**

### **References**

AASW. (2013). Practice Standards. Australian Association of Social Workers.

AASW.(2020) AWEAS. Australian Association of Social Workers.

# Appendix 1- Work-based placement contract

SOCIAL WORK AND HUMAN SERVICES  
JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY

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

WS3503, WS5304, WS4504, WS5605  
**(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:

| <b>AASW requirements that need to be met</b>  | <b>How is this going to be met</b> |
|---|------------------------------------|
| <b>Regular weekly supervision of at least 1 hour duration</b>   |                                    |
| <b>Regular attention to and review of identified learning goals</b>   |                                    |
| <b>Time allocated as part of usual duties to do a daily reflective journal (of at least 30 minutes a day)</b> |                                    |
| <b>Library time each week (approx. 4 hrs)</b>   |                                    |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Allocation of learning experiences not involving the student's routine work responsibilities</b>  |  |
| <b>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</b> |  |
| <b>Staff/ team willingness to support the student as a student as well as a fellow worker</b>  |  |
| <b>Provision of a field educator who is not the student's line manager or usual supervisor</b>   |  |

**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:**