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Social Work

Field Education Quick Guide



Acknowledgement 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 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 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 at the examiner meetings.	Field Education Academic Lead Ms Alice Scott alice.scott1@jcu.edu.au 07 4232 1193 (Cairns) Field Education Coordinators Dr Michael Dee michael.dee@jcu.edu.au 07 4232 1362 (Cairns) Ms Mengting Lin mengting.lin@jcu.edu.au (Cairns) Dr Doris Asante doris.asante@jcu.edu.au 07 4781 6749 (Townsville) Ms Sandra Croaker sandra.croaker@jcu.edu.au 07 4781 4977 (Townsville) Ms Allira Caddies allira.caddies@jcu.edu.au (Townsville)

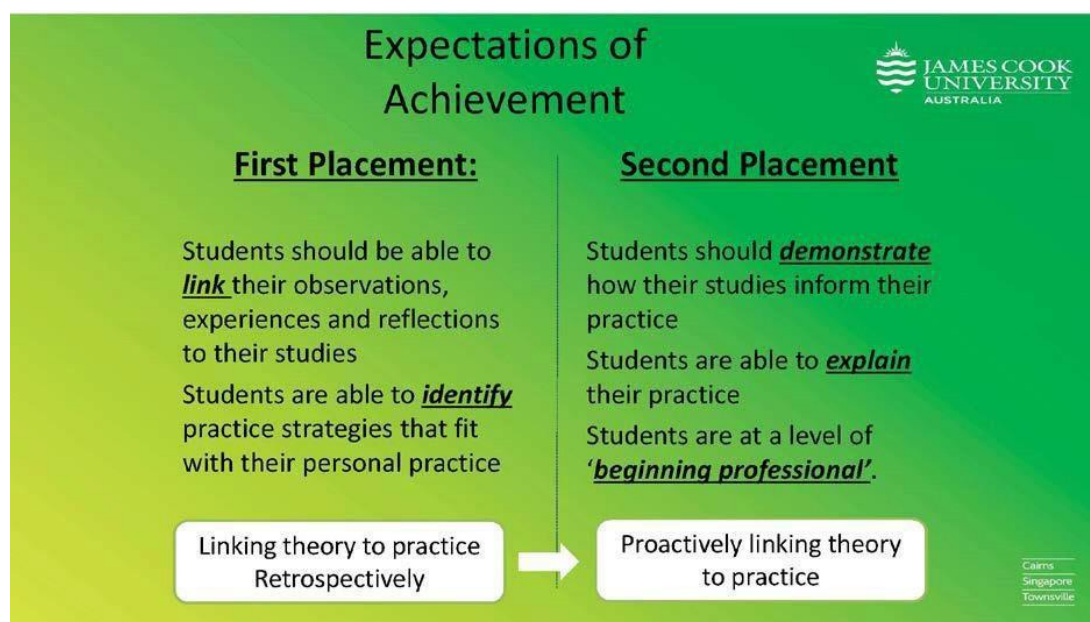
Where Field Education Fits in the Social Work Courses

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 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 have the skills they need to transition from study to social work practice. Figure 1 visualizes 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 duration for each placement is 500 hours. Each placement is guided by the student's Learning Plan. The student is responsible for preparing the Learning Plan document in consultation with the Field Educator, Task Supervisor (if applicable) and FELO. All placement stakeholders will meet at least three times throughout the placement to map and evaluate the student's progress. These liaison meetings are to be organized 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
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	Standard 1. Social workers conduct themselves according to the values, principles and guidelines of the AASW Code of Ethics 2020.
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	Standard 2. Social workers practice in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to support their priorities and aspirations. Standard 4. Social workers practice respectfully and inclusively with regard to culture and diversity.
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	3. Evaluate social work theories, concepts, methods and techniques, and apply to research and practice	Standard 5. Social workers practice within a professional knowledge framework informed by a critical understanding of contemporary social work theory and research.

BSW and MSW(PQ) Field Education 1	BSW Field Education 2	MSW (PQ) Advanced Social Work Practicum	AASW Practice Standards 2023
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	<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>
5. Implement information recording and sharing strategies	5. Implement advanced information recording and sharing strategies	5. Implement advanced information recording and sharing strategies	<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>
6. Actively participate in professional development and supervision	6. Actively participate in professional development and supervision through critical reflection and research	6. Actively participate in professional development and supervision through critical reflection and research, in order to advance professional practice	<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.

Field Educators

Field Educators are qualified social workers with a minimum of two years of full-time practice experience, or its part-time equivalent (AASW, 2023a). Field Educators have the important task of helping students develop their social work knowledge, understanding and skills through a supervisory process. This is achieved by providing support and guidance, in addition to clear feedback about the student's strengths and limitations.

Field Educators can be onsite or external supervisors (see Chapter 5). Both onsite and external supervisors provide weekly supervision to students. Students with an external Field Educator will also receive supervision from one or more Task Supervisors. The Task Supervisor role is described in the next section.

Field Educators (and Task Supervisors, if applicable) are responsible for assessing the student's progress with their placement. Using their assessment, the Field Educator recommends the student's progress and final grade to the FELO.

The Field Educator and student will arrange a formal, structured 1.5hr supervision session for every 35 hours of placement (approximately once per week). These sessions 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 placement settings, one or more day-to-day Task Supervisors and an external Field Educator will support students. Task Supervisors work in collaboration with the

external Field Educator, the student and FELO to help the student develop the knowledge and skills necessary for effective social work practice. Task Supervisors support and guide 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.

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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 students 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 the community
- Offer a progression of varied tasks and learning activities
- Help the student prepare their Learning Plan within 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 Social Work and Human Services staff who maintain communication with stakeholders. The primary responsibility of FELOs is to ensure the student's placement provides opportunities for them to become an effective social work practitioner. As per the AASW (2023a) requirements, the FELO provides oversight and support for the student, Field Educator and Task Supervisor (if applicable).

FELOs are responsible for the following tasks:

- Meet with the student during the three online or onsite liaison meetings
- Assist with assessment requirements such as finalizing 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 below).

The FELO may also consult with a Field Education Coordinator and respond to any raised issues or concerns during the student's placement.

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 primary aims of the liaison meetings are to:

- Clarify stakeholder expectations and finalize the Learning Plan (first liaison meeting)

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- 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 (third liaison meeting, see Chapter 10).

A Suggested Format for Liaison Meetings

The student provides:

- An overview of their learning experiences by discussing their engagements with the agency, tasks they have undertaken, project work they have completed, and client contacts
- A self-assessment of their performance to date by discussing their written responses to the Student Self-Assessment form. Responses to the Student Self-Assessment form must directly reference the learning outcomes and goals outlined in the Learning Plan. To elaborate on their self-assessment, students may discuss specific cases they have been involved with and their practice framework.

The Field Educator (and Task Supervisor, if applicable)

- Share their observation and assessment of the student's progress while identifying the student's strengths and areas for improving their professional practice. These topics will reference the student's self-assessment, the progress grades and comments in the Field Educator (or Task Supervisor) Assessment Form, which are informed by ongoing discussions between the Field Educator, Task Supervisor (if applicable) and the student, so the student is not surprised by their progress grades.
- Where applicable, discuss any concerns regarding progress with the student before liaison meetings. These discussions need to involve practical and collaborative plans to address the concern. If necessary, the Field Educator or Task Supervisor will also inform the FELO so appropriate intervention can take quickly place. Please see 'Managing Challenges on Placement' for further information.

The FELO, Field Educator and Task Supervisor (if applicable) are responsible for indicating the student's progress grade and final grade (see below). If there is a discrepancy between their assessments after attempted negotiations, a Field Education Coordinator may be invited to assist in finding a resolution (see Chapter 10).

Ensuring Adequate Liaison is Provided

Liaison meetings are an important aspect of placements. If there are concerns that the liaison meetings are not adequate, the following steps need to be taken:

1. The concerned stakeholder(s) need to discuss the situation with all stakeholders and agree on future liaison processes.
2. If one or more stakeholders have continuing concerns, they need to 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 the 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
- the 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: Assessments can change from time to time. For updated information, FELO can refer to student's 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 grade and overall progress grade (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 need to 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 Steps

Challenges may arise between stakeholders for various reasons requiring and may require different steps of responding depending on the nature of the challenge. Most importantly, stakeholders must resist the temptation to deny, overlook or avoid these challenges. If addressed early, the stakeholders may have a better chance of overcoming challenges and turning these into meaningful learning opportunities. Stakeholders are encouraged to follow these protocols:

1. Promptly discuss the challenge with relevant stakeholders, and if relevant, another 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 need to inform the FELO and decide if a formal meeting is required.
3. If required, the FELO needs to 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 such as insufficient time for supervision, inadequate learning outcomes or conflict between the Field Educator (or Task Supervisor, if applicable) and the student, could threaten the placement's progress.

Field Educators and Task Supervisors need to inform the student and FELO -promptly if challenges arise. When necessary, a meeting with all stakeholders needs to be arranged as soon as practicable 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 need to 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 in 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

The following questions and answers may help 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 Field Education Academic Lead 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?

Students are responsible to organise the meeting time and agenda for each meeting. However, most students might find it useful to receive some guidance with organising the first liaison meeting (e.g. navigating busy schedules for FEs, TSs and FELOs.) During the first liaison meeting, the Learning Plan, including each stakeholder’s role and expectations, are discussed before the document is finalized and signed.

During the second and third liaison meetings, the focus is on the students’ progression through placement and their learning to ascertain whether the placement is at a satisfactory level. The student’s learning outcomes or additional learning needs are to be identified and discussed.

3. What should be covered in the Learning Plan?

Learning Plans need to reflect the AASW Practice Standards 2023, and the learning outcomes presented in the student’s subject outline and thereby the level of placement. The student and Field Educator (and Task Supervisor, if applicable) need to consider how the Learning Plans are relevant to the agency, and the document is to be reviewed by the FELO to ensure it reflects the level of placement the student is engaged in.

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, two-hour online, or in-person peer-group workshops, are held during the student’s placement. Before attending 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

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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 end-of-placement presentation
- Confirmation that the three journal entries or project reflections were received
- All of the signed timesheets demonstrate the student has completed 500 hours.

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 organise the submission timeframes at the first liaison meeting.

If the FELO does not receive the documentation on time, they need to follow up with the student via email or phone. However, if the student does not respond to these contact attempts, the FELO needs to raise this issue promptly with the Placements Team.

8. Who is checking the timesheets for accuracy?

Student logs their placement hours using their Timesheets document to show the progressive totals of the time spent on placement and the tasks they completed (e.g., research or library time). Each weekly timesheet needs to be verified by and signed by the Field Educator (or Task Supervisor where applicable).

- 9.** These timesheets are Excel spreadsheets with embedded formulae that automatically calculate the hours. Information needs to be entered per the instructions provided. Information entered incorrectly will disable the automatic calculations. If this occurs, the FELO needs to check the accuracy of the calculation.

10. What assessment pieces require feedback from the FELO?

(1) Learning Plan and (2) Student Self-Assessment Forms: 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 at the liaison meetings.

(3) Journal entries and project reflection: The FELO reads and provides feedback (verbal or written as per negotiation between student and FELO) on the student's three journal entries or project reflections. Where the student's work is not up to a professional standard as specified in the assessment description, the FELO will ask the student to re-write and re-submit the assessment.

(4) Placement presentation: The FELO attends the student's placement presentation at the third liaison meeting and provides direct feedback.

If the placement is incomplete, the student will be asked to complete the required work. If the placement is unsatisfactory, the FELO will ask the student to complete additional work as determined by the field education coordinator.

11. 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 student used the process to make sense of their work in light of their personal and professional practice framework.

The feedback must include comments that:

- Foster the student's critical thought and conscious experience of learning.
- Prompt students to extend their reflections by engaging in further reflection, study or practice.
- 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.

12. How can students use research time?

Students can utilise their research time (also called library time) to search for and read information relevant to the placement, the agency, and their learning goals.

For example, a student might research:

- a particular theoretical approach relevant to the agency, such as motivational interviews, narrative therapy or community development
- information relevant to a client group, such as statistics or general mental health resources
- a challenge the agency is experiencing.

Up to four hours of research time a week (pro-rata for part-time placements) can be counted towards placement hours. Students need to 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.

13. 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. Where there are 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 when any difficulties or performance issues arise.

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

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

