

# SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION AT CSU STUDENTS PRE- PLACEMENT HANDBOOK 2017

This booklet has been compiled by the Work Place Learning Office to  
provide an overview of the process of placement

## Contents

Contents.....	1
Acknowledgement .....	3
Introduction .....	3
Explanation of Terms Used In This Document.....	4
Field Education Subjects .....	4
Pre Requisite Subjects/knowledge for Field Education .....	4
Courses served by these subject.....	5
Details about the Subjects .....	5
Staffing In Field Education .....	6
Field Education Coordinator/Subject Coordinator – Therese Jones-Mutton .....	7
Placement Establishment Academic (PEA) .....	7
Professional Practice Assessment Assessor .....	7
Professional Practice Academic (PPA).....	8
Academic Liaison Person.....	8
Workplace Learning Office (WPLO).....	8
Field Educator(s) .....	8
Professional Practice Assessment Strand .....	9
Placement Strand.....	10
Type of placements.....	11
Direct Practice: Clinical/casework/counselling emphasis.....	11
Indirect Practice: Community development/policy/research emphasis .....	11
Social Work Field Education in your place of employment .....	12
Overseas placements .....	13
Assignments in Field Education .....	13
Getting Ready for Placement the Compliance Process .....	14
Police Checks.....	14
Working With Children Checks (WWCC) in NSW .....	14

Immunisation .....	15
Professional Behavior .....	16
Ethical behavior.....	16
Code of Conduct.....	16
Occupational health and safety .....	16
Disclosure of personal information.....	17
Privacy considerations .....	17
Student refusal to give permission for disclosure.....	18
Negotiating your placement .....	18
The Placement Process .....	19
Step 1 .....	19
Step 2 .....	19
Step 3 .....	20
Step 4 .....	20
Step 5 .....	20
Attendance.....	20
Length and timing .....	20
Record of attendance.....	21
Planning your social work field education experience .....	22
Work out your learning needs .....	22
Your five year plan .....	22
Contact Procedures.....	23
Academic enquiries.....	23
Workplace Learning Office.....	23
Text and Learning Materials .....	23
Required reading / resources.....	23
Recommended reading / resources.....	23

## Acknowledgement

*Social workers acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the First Australians, whose lands, winds and waters we all now share, and pay respect to their unique values, and their continuing and enduring cultures which deepen and enrich the life of our nation and communities. Social workers commit to acknowledge and understand the historical and contemporary disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the implication of this for social work practice. Social workers are responsible for ensuring that their practice is culturally competent, safe and sensitive (AASW Code of Ethics)*

## Introduction

Welcome to Social Work Field Education at Charles Sturt University.

Field Education is a collaborative venture between the Human Services Field and Charles Sturt University - its staff and students. All three parties work collaboratively to create the optimum environment for your professional learning, and to assess your performance.

Field Education is the subject that students remember. It is the place where your developing professional identity, skills and knowledge all come together. This is your opportunity to find out if social work is really the career for you; also the time to put theory and practice together in real life situations.

The policies that govern Field Education are found in the Subject Outline – however some of these are included in this document. Use this document primarily to guide you in your preparation for the placement process. When you enroll subject materials, assessment information and resources will be available through the subject Interact Site.

**Therese Jones-Mutton**

**Field Education Coordinator**



## Explanation of Terms Used In This Document

- There are two strands of study for first placement. **The Placement Strand** and the **Professional Practice Assessment Strand**.

**Placement Strand** – students undertake a structured, individualised period of experiential learning in an approved real world work site, under the supervision of a qualified and experienced social worker.

**Professional Practice Assessment Strand** – Eligible students undertake a reflective exploration of their existing professional knowledge, skills, practices and values and apply these to a social work framework of professional thinking, doing and being (identity) under the guidance of a social work academic.

Please be aware that these two strands have different assessment items and submission dates and are only relevant to the first placement.

- **Social Work Field Education and Work Place Learning.** These are two terms that you will hear a lot about. They basically mean the same thing. SW Field Education is the AASW reference to placement while Work Place Learning is the generic term that CSU uses to all placement activities in all disciplines and schools.
- **Placement vs Practicum** – again these both mean the same thing and placement is the newer term used by the AASW
- **Supervisor vs Field Educator** – these are also the same term – the current term is Field Educator to reflect the education role of supervisor.

## Field Education Subjects

### *Pre Requisite Subjects/knowledge for Field Education*

Student undertaking a placement for the first placement must have satisfactorily completed the first theory and practice subject. In some circumstances students are able to be co enrolled in the theory and practice and placement subject, however the timing of the start of the placement will be at the Field Education Coordinators discretion. Decision making around this take into account the students experience in the human services field, their progress in the course, with particular reference to foundational practice knowledge such as social research methods and micro counselling skills.

Students undertaking a second placement must have completed first placement or the Professional Practice Assessment Strand satisfactorily or have a credit transfer from another institution or Recognition of Previously Learning (RPL).

### *Courses served by these subject*

In the BSW and MSW (PQ) there are two social work field education subjects, over the course of which the student is required to successfully complete a total of **1000 hours** social work education time (about 144, 7-hour work days). Other courses that may also participate in Field Education include the Master in Child and Adolescent Welfare and the Bachelor of Social Sciences (Social Welfare).

The subjects are:

#### **Bachelor of Social Work**

HCS303 Social Work Field Education 1

HCS402 Social Work Field Education 2

SWK424 Social Work Field Education 2A (this is a one session subject)

#### **Bachelor of Social Science**

HCS303 Social Work Field Education 1

#### **Masters of Social Work (PQ)**

HCS505 Social Work Field Education 1

HCS506 Social Work Field Education 2

#### **Masters of Child and Adolescent Welfare**

HCS505 Social Work Field Education 1

## **Details about the Subjects**

The first placement and the following second placement must be completed in different calendar years. You cannot be enrolled in both subjects in the same year.

With the exception of SWK424 all subjects are yearlong. Enrolment in the subject is required in first session of each year.

Student who are planning to graduate must have completed their placement assessment items by the end of October each year, in order for time to process their grade for graduation.

Placements often take place outside the formal teaching sessions and there is scope for the subject to be carried over into third session.

Short term international programs that are currently offered at CSU cannot have hours credited for the placement subject. This is because they do not meet the minimum AASW requirements for a placement experience.

Upon enrolment (from October onwards) in the subject, registration forms will be forwarded to students. The registration form is a critical tool in Field Education due to the information required and compliance processes attached. Students can be withdrawn from the Field Education Subject for failing to comply with these processes.

Once fully registered you will be allocated an Academic who will work with you to set up your placement. While all attempts are made to locate a suitable placement for you, factors such as availability of placements in your geographical location and agency capacity to take on students are all factors outside CSU's control. If it is likely that you will require additional time for a placement to be sourced, a plan will for managing this will be discussed with you by your academic.

Furthermore while we always source a placement as close to your residential address as possible, obtaining a suitable placement may require you to travel. Your cooperation and understanding around this is appreciated. No student will be asked to travel further than 100kms round trip each day.

## Staffing In Field Education

We have a significant number of staff involved in Field Education. Approximately half of these are sessional staff (or casual staff). Due to the range of geographical locations where students undertake placement, sessional staff based in that area, greatly facilitate the learning experience for students. You will be advised by the Workplace Learning Office (WPLO) which academic has been assigned to you for each stage of the placement experience. Your assigned academic will be your go to person for that part of the placement phase. Please be aware that many staff are part time and may only be available on certain days. However we do work as a team and should you need to contact an academic urgently you can liaise with the Workplace Learning Office (WPLO).

Listed below are some of the roles of staff in Field Education

**All staff involved in Field Education, play a role in teaching, mentoring, supporting and modeling social work behavior.**

### *Field Education Coordinator/Subject Coordinator – Therese Jones-Mutton*

The field education coordinator/subject coordinator is responsible for the administration of the field education program.

Responsibilities include:

- Support and assistance to students, field educators and academic staff;
- determination of grades;
- problem solving and mediation if you and/or your academic liaison person or field educator have a problem that you can't solve together;
- development of field education policy and curriculum;
- coordination of academic liaison staff;
- mediating resolutions in cases where difficulties arise in a placement which cannot be resolved by the student, academic liaison staff and field educator/s;
- organising field education meetings;
- involvement in field education research;
- coordination of field educator training;
- running preparation and debriefing sessions;
- advising academic liaison staff and students about research ethics procedures where necessary;
- other related administrative duties.

### *Placement Establishment Academic (PEA)*

The placement establishment academic is responsible for locating your placement, having considered your placement needs. They will contact you after you have finalised all your required registration documents for Social Work Field Education., This person will interview you for any issues or needs you might have in relation to placement.

### *Professional Practice Assessment Assessor*

Assesses potential student's eligibility for the Professional Practice Assessment Strand (PPA) and assesses the first assessment task for the first placement subject. The PPA assessor makes recommendations to the subject coordinator about the student second placement needs and hours required to be undertaken.

### *Professional Practice Academic (PPA)*

These are either academic staff, sessional staff or practitioners from the field who assess the student professional practice interview. It is a requirement of the AASW that all interviews be conducted by two social workers.

### *Academic Liaison Person*

An academic liaison person is assigned to your placement from the beginning of the placement and you are advised of this in an email. They are involved in:

- formal liaison contacts with you and your field educator to assist in important decision-making points in the placement;
- informal contacts throughout the placement as you and/or your field educator require;
- responsibility for extensions for assignment due dates;
- problem solving and mediation as required;
- responsibility for re-negotiating time frames of placements including notification of absences and extension of placement length;
- marking of written requirements and recommendation of grade to the subject coordinator.

### *Workplace Learning Office (WPLO)*

The workplace learning office maintains all files and records relating to placement. The workplace learning office maintains an extensive database of placements and field educators. The workplace learning office liaises with academic staff and can assist you to contact them when needed. These are your first contact for any Field Education inquiries.

### *Field Educator(s)*

In all accredited Australian social work courses, each student on placement must be supervised by a qualified social worker who is eligible for membership of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) and who has a minimum of 2 years' full time experience, or its part time equivalent. Field Educators can also be qualified and experienced human service personnel who work in the field. Field educators who do not have social work qualifications work as co-supervisors in partnership with social work qualified Field Educators, due to AASW accreditation requirements.

Field educators must have a commitment to continuing professional education and an interest in developing social work knowledge and skills. They must also have the time to meet the supervision requirements for taking on a student, set by the AASW. This involves a minimum of 1.5 hours of supervision per student for each five days (35 hours) of placement.

There are 3 possibilities for field education arrangements:

- The social work field educator meets the AASW accreditation requirements and is located on-site at the placement.
- An experienced non-social work field educator supervises the student's work on-site, while a local social work field educator supervises the student off-site. Normally the on-site field educator is responsible for supervising the student's day-to-day work (that is, line management). The off-site supervisor (social worker) is usually responsible for the social work side of the education and support functions of supervision. The off-site field educator is considered to be the primary supervisor in recommending grades to the university. See 'Roles and Responsibilities' in the subject materials for more information about co-supervision arrangements. A co-supervision arrangement is possible for one placement only.
- If there is no on-site or off-site field educator available, supervision may be organised under the direct auspice of the university. This arrangement is only recommended when no other options are available and is possible for one placement only.

## Professional Practice Assessment Strand

This strand replaces the Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) process that was in force up until 2013.

If you have 3 years full time equivalent in a “relevant context” in the last 7 years of which 1 year FTE has been in the last three years you are eligible to participate in the PPA strand (Students who do not meet this minimum work requirement cannot participate in this strand.)

“Relevant context” is defined as being a position that either manages, or directly provides, what social workers consider to be social work or social welfare services to clients of the agency involving activities that the University regards as suitable for a field education placement and involve familiarity with and use of social work practice skills, such as assessment and counselling and a range of social work methods such as casework, group work and community work.

Where the clients include the staff of the agency, the applicant must occupy a designated counseling position. To determine your eligibility for the PPA strand or to obtain further information email your CV and Job Descriptions to [HumanServices-WPL@csu.edu.au](mailto:HumanServices-WPL@csu.edu.au).

You must be enrolled in the first field education subject in both sessions one and two and completed and return the Registration for Social Work Field Education form.

The AASW does not permit any credit for life experience for field education, nor is PPA available for Social Work Field Education 2.

## Placement Strand

In order to successfully complete first placement, social work students will have attained the practice standards of an entry level social worker in the assessment stages of social work practice.

In order to successfully complete second placement, social work students will have attained the practice standards of an entry level social worker in the intervention, evaluation of social work practice.

Students must undertake a total of **1000 hours** of placement which is divided across two placements of 500 hours each.

Students undertaking the PPA strand for first placement must do either 600 or 500 hours in their second placement depending on their level of attainment with the standards.

Students undertaking the Bachelor of Social Science/ Master of Child and Adolescent Welfare are required to undertake 400 hours of placement. However students are encouraged to consider doing 500 hours in case they wish to have their placement credited into a social work qualification in future.

The **Timeline** which is included on the Web Site summarises the subject requirements. It will also be included in the set up letters sent prior to you commencing your placement.

Note that the **Timeline** assumes a 72 day placement 7 hours per day. If students wish to negotiate placements of different lengths, the dates that assessment items are required are also negotiated individually, based on the time frames. Please note that this timeline begins at the point after you receive notification that you have successfully completed Assessment One.

The AASW outlines that the minimum hours for placement are 280 hours. This is deemed to be the minimum time required for the student to demonstrate the competencies. While all students are encouraged to undertake a placement of 500 hours – in circumstances where there might be issues with leave, or unexpected issues presenting on placement, this would be the minimum hours required – in order for the placement to be finalised as a completed placement.

## Type of placements

For those doing two placements, each student must have placements in at least two settings, and in two different fields of practice.

These are selected from fields and practice settings with a variety of learning experiences which complement and extend the student's existing professional strengths. One Social Work Field Education placement must have a major focus on Direct Practice Activities e.g. clinical emphasis and the other a primary focus on Indirect Practice Activities such as community development/policy/ research. Thus each placement must involve substantial amounts of work from the corresponding group of activities.

There is no particular order in which placements are to be completed - it depends on the student's learning needs and priorities as well as what is available.

### *Direct Practice: Clinical/casework/counselling emphasis*

Casework, counselling or therapy with individuals, families, or groups which emphasise interpersonal helping skills.

In these placements, achieving practice standards in the assessment stages of an intervention could include being able to:

- Independently assess a client's needs, or carry out an intake procedure, following organisational assessment protocols;
- Undertake a multidimensional assessment of an individual or family;
- Planning an intervention for a client, including mapping out a case plan, but not necessarily carrying out the intervention;
- Assessing the needs of an existing group or the need for a new group with a clinical focus such as anger management, grief and loss, self esteem groups etc.

### *Indirect Practice: Community development/policy/research emphasis*

Community development, policy work, administration, research, task focused group work or specific projects negotiated with field education staff.

**N.B.** Group-work may fit into either category depending on its focus.

In placements with a focus on community development or policy, achieving practice standards in the assessment stages of an intervention could include being able to:

- Plan and carry out a community needs assessment, or needs assessment for a part of a community such as the need for aged care;

- Assess the need for and plan a group program, e.g. education in substance abuse, sibling support group, parenting groups, employment preparation groups and in some cases run the group;
- Assess the needs for policy development, and in some cases develop new policy;
- Assess the needs for new services, write funding submissions, establish working parties to write submissions etc;
- Research the need for and/or undertake some activities that have been identified as being needed e.g. developing access maps for local councils, updating resource directories, developing pamphlets to advertise services etc;
- Develop skills in project management including time management and resource management.

Most placements with an indirect focus (community development, policy work, research or evaluation) will have a substantial project for you to complete.

Important: any research involving human participants will need ethics committee approval.

Practice settings for field education are usually agencies in which social workers are employed or could be employed.

### *Social Work Field Education in your place of employment*

Generally, field education must be undertaken in a practice setting and field of practice which is different from your place of employment or regular voluntary work.

Under **exceptional** circumstances only one may be undertaken in an agency where employment or voluntary work is being, or has recently been, undertaken. This depends on all other AASW requirements for field education is met. Any placement undertaken in a student's place of employment or voluntary work will be for duration of a maximum of 72 days (500 hours). If you complete the PPA strand you are then ineligible to complete a placement in your place of work.

In these circumstances, the PEA must be satisfied that the following conditions have been met:

- The student has been in their place of employment for 12 months or more.
- The student will have appropriate learning opportunities and educational goals, and that sound educational processes are in place.
- The student will be allocated tasks or projects in a field of practice which is different from the field of practice this student is employed in.
- The students is not carrying any workload related activities while they are on placement.
- The field educator is a social worker who is not the student's usual supervisor.

- Completion of the Agency Agreement for Social Work Placement in Student's Place of Work form (emailed to you by your PEA).
- Completion of the Workplace Placement Plan form (emailed to you by your PEA).

Students wishing to undertake a placement in their place of employment are advised that the negotiation of such a placement will be a lengthy process due to the complexity of issues and number of people involved. The assessment of a potential workplace placement is the responsibility of the PEA, and involves a written contract (as per point 6 above) between the employing agency and CSU (contact CSU staff about this). A placement will not be established in a student's place of employment unless the PEA is convinced that all the conditions, stated above, can be met. All parties to the placement are expected to sign an agreement for meeting the above conditions.

As part of CSU's duty of care, the student is not permitted to undertake a combined Working/placement week of more than a standard working week.

### *Overseas placements*

This option is only available to student undertaking placement two and who have previously undertaken a direct placement with a social worker onsite. Other criteria that is considered:

- Supervision can be arranged which meets AASW accreditation requirements
- CSU staff are convinced, based on previous placement reports, you have sufficient level of practice, autonomy and professional skills and confidence in challenging situations to undertake a placement remote from direct university support.
- Overseas placements cannot be more than 72 days (500 hours) in length.
- You have to be able to speak the local language.

**Note:** If you are an Australian resident and have RPL or undertook the PPA strand for your first field education subject, you cannot undertake an overseas placement. The AASW requires that at least one placement has to be completed in Australia.

It may be possible to obtain some funding to assist in overseas placements, through the Lila Kirilik Social Justice Fund. For more details, review the Interact Site.

## Assignments in Field Education

All students undertaking a placement for the first time at CSU must complete the first assessment item – The Work Sheet and Orientation Plan. This assignment is a reflective tool designed to assess a student's readiness for placement. Once this completed all other assignments for field education are completed as part of the placement hours.

There are 8 assessment items which includes forms such as the Placement Negotiation Form and journal

## Getting Ready for Placement: the Compliance Process

As students will be working with vulnerable adults and children, the process of screening is critical. Students who do not meet these requirements are generally unable to proceed onto placement

### *Police Checks*

Most agencies accepting students on placement require a national police check (also known as a criminal history check). Students need to apply online (below). Print out the confirmation form and take it, along with proof of identity documents, to your local police station and pay the fee (currently \$52.00 in NSW).

<http://www.australia.gov.au/content/police-checks-criminal-history-records-checks>

If you have already received a police clearance for this course, and it is current, then you do not need to apply again. Police Checks are current for 3 years, and must be valid for the full time of your placement. Once you receive your police check please take a copy and the original to a JP for the copy to be certified, scan and email the copy to the WPLO. It must be certified by a JP before we can accept it as part of your registration process.

### *Working With Children Checks (WWCC) in NSW*

Students have to make their own application. You should do this once you have enrolled in your first field education subject. The check remains valid for 5 years. There is no fee for students.

Fill in an online application form at <http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/working-with-children/working-with-children-check>

If you cannot access the online system, call the customer service line on (02) 2986 7627 and an officer will complete the form for you. When you have completed the application, you will get an application number. Verify your identity at a NSW motor registry or Government Access Centre. You will need your application number and proof of identity. Once your application has been processed, you will be notified of the outcome by email or post.

There are only two results of a Working with Children Check – a clearance or a bar. See Fact sheet: Bars and appeals at:

[http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/191/FS12\\_Barsandappeals\\_July2014.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y](http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/191/FS12_Barsandappeals_July2014.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y)

Students in other states will need to provide their state equivalent. Links to their state sites are available at <http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/working-with-children/working-with-children-check/resources>, scroll to Other States and Territories at the bottom of the page.

If you have questions, please contact the Workplace Learning Office (02 6933 2784). It is possible that an agency may require a different kind of check and you will need to comply with that agency's policy if you wish to undertake a placement with them.

### *Compliance Process for NSW Department of Health*

From 2012 information about all students enrolled in field education will be registered with NSW Department of Health. Details will have been emailed to you earlier. If you have not yet returned the requested information please do so as a matter of urgency.

This meets 2 purposes:

- enables registration for field education placements in NSW Health
- meets risk compliance assessment requirements for NSW Health and organisations requiring compliance with these checks

Students who will undertake their placement outside NSW will have to meet the requirements of their own state. The information below while based on NSW is a good starting point for all Australian states.

### *Immunisation*

The NSW Department of Health and some other agencies have immunisation requirements for all students on placement. In these organisations a student will be refused a placement if they cannot demonstrate immunisation compliance. Students in other parts of Australia are encouraged to consider these recommendations and seek advice on their immunisation requirements from their own State's Health Department. NSW Health requires the following immunisation for field education students:

- Adult Diphtheria, Tetanus & Pertussis (whooping cough)
- Hepatitis B (full details on website noted below)
- Measles/Mumps/Rubella
- Varicella (chickenpox)
- Tuberculosis (required if born overseas in high TB incidence country or lived overseas in a high TB incidence country for longer than 3 months)

It is also strongly recommended that you are immunised for Influenza

Full information available at: [www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/oasv.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/oasv.aspx)

When you have completed the immunisations and required serologies (blood tests), including having them signed, dated and practice-stamped by the doctor, email a copy to the Workplace Learning Office along with the other required documents in the Health Package. [hssworkplacelearning@csu.edu.au](mailto:hssworkplacelearning@csu.edu.au) (6933-2784). If you are unsure of your immunisation status or have no information regarding your past immunisations visit your doctor and discuss with him.

A student will be refused a placement in NSW Health if they are not fully compliant with their requirements. Students in other parts of Australia are encouraged to consider these recommendations and seek advice on their immunisation requirements from their own State's Health Department. If you have specific questions regarding your health status please contact the CSU Health Promotions Officer, Coleen Pearce [cpearce@csu.edu.au](mailto:cpearce@csu.edu.au)

## Professional Behavior

### *Ethical behavior*

Failure to behave in accordance with the AASW Code of Ethics at any point in Social Work Field Education will result in an unsatisfactory grade for the subject. This includes behavior such as racist comments. You should ensure that you are familiar with the AASW Code of Ethics, which is provided as part of the subject package. Unprofessional behaviour will not be tolerated.

### *Code of Conduct*

As a training professional it is important that you comply with the universities policies around student behavior as outline previously. In addition many of you will also need to comply with specific agency requirements around behavior. Failure to comply can result in an unsatisfactory grade for the subject. This extends to behavior whilst on the placement and may also include your interactions on social media. Students are strongly advised to review these Codes of Conducts when signing them and to understand their content. For example you must not name the agency that you are undertaking your placement at on social media or speak or post about them in a negative way. While you may see Facebook as a personal and private place for your thoughts, this is not how placement agencies or potential employees may view this.

### *Occupational health and safety*

As part of CSU's duty of care to students, we remind students that the combined number of hours spent working in paid employment and on placement should add up to a standard working week. It is important that students negotiate this as part of organising their placements.

CSU has a working/driving hours policy that no more than ten (10) hours per day can be spent in combined work and travel if the person working is also the person driving. Students are required to comply with this policy.

In addition, students are required upon commencing placement to become familiar with the following agency policies and practices which may be in place. Worker and Workplace Safety and Security policies and Vehicle/Travel Safety policies.

Students should notify the university of any incident, accident or potential hazard affecting them on <https://www.csu.edu.au/division/hr/health-safety-wellbeing/accidents-incidents>. Please direct these concerns to your academic liaison.

### *Equal Opportunity and Anti-discrimination policies*

Students are required upon commencing placement to become familiar with the agency Equal Opportunity and Anti-discrimination policy.

### *Disclosure of personal information*

On behalf of their staff and clients, placement agencies have an expectation that the University does not place students who are ill-prepared, threatening, or unlikely to be able to cope with professional work activities in a human service environment.

The University is also concerned for the welfare of students who are likely to find the experience of placement to be personally and professionally challenging at times. For this reason the CSU staff need to be aware of any personal issue or condition of the student that may be adversely affected by the experience of undertaking placement. This is an advisory warning to students that placement is challenging and students are expected to be accountable for their conduct and self-care on placement.

If you have a condition of any kind (a mental health issue, a learning disability, a hidden physical disability such as epilepsy) that you think might impact either on you, the placement organisation, or your future clients, we advise you to discuss this with your PEA before you start a placement. Together you can decide if you need to formulate strategies that will help you to do deal with this, or manage it constructively, throughout your professional career. As part of this discussion, you may decide that either you, your PEA, or both of you, will discuss this with your field educator before you begin placement. Past students with a mental health issue have done this successfully, and negotiated, firstly with their PEA and later with their placement field educator, about how to detect early warning signs, and how to intervene in an episode early, before it impacts on clients or staff. This kind of negotiation has meant that the students successfully completed their placements, rather than failing or having to withdraw on health grounds.

### *Privacy considerations*

It is the student's responsibility to determine the necessity for the disclosure. Students may decline to make the disclosure and no inference will be taken from doing so. Students have

a right of privacy. Personal information that you choose to disclose to CSU staff will be treated in strictest confidence, unless you give written permission for them to disclose it to another person or placement organisation. This does not apply to information about illegal or unethical behaviour that may impact on your professional work.

If CSU staff feel it is in your best interest, they will discuss with you the possibility of providing the personal details to your field educator. Should you agree to do so, CSU will not disclose any personal information until you provide the permission in writing, and the permission will specify what information, to whom the information will be given, and for what purpose, so that you will know exactly what information is being released.

This will only occur after the agency has indicated a willingness to offer the student a placement. Where possible it is preferred that you discuss the issue with your field educator yourself. However, sometimes students prefer CSU staff to raise the issue, which they will be happy to do for you.

### *Student refusal to give permission for disclosure*

The student has the right to refuse permission for the academic liaison person, or any other CSU staff, to disclose personal information to the **placement** field educator. Any disclosure will only be made with full and written permission.

### *Negotiating your placement*

Successful negotiation of your placement is a subject requirement and assessment item.

Placement opportunities are limited. It is your responsibility to discuss any barriers preventing you undertaking placement either in specific field of practice (e.g. child protection) or agency (e.g. mental health facility)

While we endeavor to source placements for students within the academic year, high numbers of students seeking placements from all universities across Australia and pressure in the field to do more with less, can impact on start and end dates. In some instances depending on your location it may be even difficult to source a placement for you. Your Subject Coordinator and the PEA are the staff to discuss this with. Please remember that CSU is committed to sourcing you a placement and your cooperation and understanding about these issues are appreciated. In some remote locations social workers may not be available. CSU will do what we can to support placements, but we are limited by the options available in your community. Each year CSU offers placements which include accommodation. If you are in a remote location it may be worthwhile you considering one of these options.

Negotiating placements involves a collaborative process between CSU, students, agencies, and field educators. **The final responsibility for endorsing each placement rests with CSU.** Having spent some time thinking about your learning goals and the ideal placement you need, remember that it is not always possible to organise the ideal placement each time.

Given the limited number of placement options, especially in rural and isolated areas, and the employment and other constraints of some students, it may not always be possible to meet your priorities.

Due to competition for the limited pool of field education placements across Australia, and requirements by most agencies that schools of social work observe certain protocols, **students are not allowed to canvass agencies for field placements.** This is a serious matter and students who do canvass can face disciplinary action.

Confidentiality is also involved in this CSU policy. AASW requires that field educators be suitably qualified and have at least two years' experience. Field educators' qualifications and experience are private matters, not open to investigation by unknown students.

Having established this principle, we recognise that distance education students in the BSW often come from isolated areas and/or are already experienced workers in welfare, with knowledge of local resources and networks. Field education staff will be happy to follow up any suggestions students may have, and understand that students may make initial enquiries to people and agencies already known to them.

## The Placement Process

### *Step 1*

Complete and return your Registration for Social Work Field Education documents as required. These will be emailed to you following your correct enrollment in the subject. You need to enroll in both sessions as Field Education is a yearlong subject. Once complete Submit your documents as soon as possible to maximise your placement options. Please ensure that you have arranged your certified National Police Check , you're your working with children check for NSW (or your state equivalent) The PEA will contact you to begin organising your placement once all your documents are completed. .NSW Health documents may be forwarded at any time to the office for verification by Health.

### *Step 2*

Those students undertaking placement for the first time are required to work through the **Preparation** section on the Interact site. Complete, submit and gain a Satisfactory grade in Assessment 1 in the Subject materials. Only students who have not previously undertaken a placement at CSU, or who have RPL or if it has been more than two years since the assignment was originally completed are required to submit Ass 1.

### *Step 3*

A preliminary meeting is arranged between student and potential field educator. **Assessment 2 or the Placement Negotiation Form (PNF)** is emailed to you at this stage, for completion during this meeting. During the meeting, student and field educator decide whether the placement would be a suitable learning experience in which agency requirements, student learning needs and constraints, and CSU policy can all be met. They complete Assessment 2.

### *Step 4*

As required in Assessment 2, the student completes the **Placement Negotiation Form (PNF)** (supplied by the PEA) and returns it to the field education office at least 2 weeks prior to placement starting date. Often this form is completed during the preliminary meeting.

### *Step 5*

CSU confirms suitability of the placement with the field educator and the WPLO emails letters to all parties (agency, field educator and student) endorsing the proposed social work field education arrangements and advising of the insurance cover and parties contact details. The placement begins on the agreed date.

**Whichever way the process occurs, it is important that it is treated as a learning experience for the student.** Some field educators and students, and some agencies and students are not compatible. If this becomes evident during the preliminary meeting, there is no point pursuing the placement.

If, on the other hand, all sides are satisfied that the proposed placement is suitable, the WPLO send the confirmation letters outlined above. The student arrives on the date agreed to and the placement is underway.

### *Attendance*

Attendance on placement is a requirement in this subject. Students are responsible for keeping track of their hours and having those signed off by the field educator.

### *Length and timing*

Placement times and length are individually negotiated and agreed upon by the student, agency, field educator and CSU field education staff.

Please see the **Timeline** on the website for details of subject requirements and milestones during a placement.

The timeline assumes a 72 day (500 hours) placement. Variations may be negotiated as part of the learning plan depending on individual circumstances and learning goals. No

placement will be less than 280 hours or 40 days, in order to ensure an educationally viable placement.

No placement will exceed 103 days (720 hours).

It is in students' best interest to choose the 72 day placement, as it is very difficult to successfully negotiate placements longer than 72 days.

The time commitment to field education must be educationally viable; e.g. blocks of full time (Monday-Friday) weeks and/or 2-3 days per week, with these days being consecutive.

Placements must be continuous, that is, there can be no lengthy breaks.

A minimum of 2 days per week or a total of 15 hours is required. Students who wish to undertake their placement 2 days a week must undertake two one week blocks, usually at the beginning and end of the placement.

Note that public holidays or absences due to sickness or other causes must be made up so that the negotiated number of hours on placement completed. Meal breaks and travel to and from the placement are not to be included in placement hours. Travel as part of the placement activities is included.

Students may not work more than 8 hours in an ordinary working day on placement and no more than 10 hours including travel.

### *Record of attendance*

Students must keep an accurate record of their hours spent on Social Work Field Education. Any change to the length of a placement once the student has commenced their placement must be negotiated in advance with academic liaison staff in writing. A placement will only be extended if there are sound educational reasons for doing so. Any additional hours, including those worked from home or other organisations with the permission of the field educator, may be included.

If the organisation does not have time sheets, use the time sheet contained in the forms section of your subject site. You may use an agency tool for recording your attendance provided it can be confidentially copied for your records. I.e. workplaces that have a common sign in book should not be copied and if necessary you may need to use a personal recording system in addition to the agency one.

## Planning your social work field education experience

### *Work out your learning needs*

There are several ways of planning for your social work field education:

- Think about the kinds of learning experiences you need which will point you towards the sorts of social work in which you are interested.
- Assess your existing skills and identify gaps which will make you more employable.
- Another important aspect to think about is the sort of field educator and type of supervision which will work best for you.
- A good place to start when planning your placement is to identify your existing skills and strengths.
- You will be completing exercises at the first residential school to assist you to plan for your first placement. There may also be other activities in your studies that might be helpful to review.

### *Your five year plan*

Once you have thought about your existing skills and strengths and formulated some ideas about your learning needs, it is a good idea to think ahead to when you graduate. What kind of work would you like to be doing as a social worker?

If you have a clear idea of the area in which you would like to work, plan to undertake Social Work Field Education 1 in this area. That way, you can build networks, become known and develop skills to make you more competitive when positions become available in your chosen field at the end of your course.

Think about any gaps you may have in your professional repertoire which will be barriers to you getting a job in social work or in the specific area in which you wish to work. Social Work Field Education 1 provides an ideal opportunity to gain experience in areas in which you have gaps.

If you have little experience in the social work field and do not yet know what the possibilities are for the sort of work you will want to do, it is best to base your choice of placement (at least the first one) on the field educator available. Also core areas such as income security, mental health and child protection are always good areas to consider.

The quality of the educational relationship you develop with your field educator is possibly the most important factor in determining how well your placement will go and how much you will learn. If after your negotiation interview with a potential field educator you have any doubts about your compatibility with them or the organisation, speak to the CSU staff member who organised the interview immediately.

## Contact Procedures

### *Academic enquiries*

Any questions concerning the teaching of this subject can be made by contacting your subject coordinator/Field Education Coordinator.

**Subject Coordinator** Therese Jones-Mutton

**Email** [tjones-mutton@csu.edu.au](mailto:tjones-mutton@csu.edu.au)

**Phone** (02) 69334922

**Campus** Wagga Wagga

**Building/Room number** 26/146

### *Workplace Learning Office*

The workplace learning officers are available by phone from Monday to Friday:

**Email** [HumanServices-WPL@csu.edu.au](mailto:HumanServices-WPL@csu.edu.au)

**Phone** (02) 6933 2784

**Campus** Wagga Wagga

**Building/Room number** 26/143/147/148

## Text and Learning Materials

### *Prescribed text(s)*

Your textbook for Social Work Field Education 1 and 2 is:

Cleak, H & Wilson, J (2013). *Making the most of field placement* (3rd ed.). Australia: Thomson.

Please note: You will need to refer to texts from other subjects also.

### *Required reading / resources*

Core and supplementary readings are supplied on the interact site.

### *Recommended reading / resources*

Baird, BN (1999) *The internship, practicum, and field placement handbook: A guide for the helping professions* (2nd ed.) New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Cooper, L & Briggs, L (2000) *Fieldwork in the human services*. St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin.