Charles Sturt University

Student Guide to Professional Experience Placement

Bachelor of Education (Birth to Five Years)

Faculty of Education: Workplace Learning

2027

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Introduction

Professional experience is a foundational requirement of your Bachelor of Education (Birth to Five Years) degree. Professional experience provides you with the opportunity to extend your insight into the role of the teacher in an early childhood service and provide scope for the development of professional pedagogy. It offers you an opportunity to observe, plan, implement and reflect upon learning, play and relationships for young children; to communicate with families, teachers and other educators to address the learning capabilities of young children in a group setting; to respond positively to family and community cultures in caregiving and education practices; and to implement quality environments and leadership for wellness and wellbeing for young children.

During professional experience, you will collaborate with your mentor to observe, document and intentionally plan for children's learning following the pedagogical practices relating to the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), the National Quality Standards (NQS) for Early Childhood Education and Care, and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers – Graduate Level.

This Student Guide to Professional Experience Placement provides an overview of expectations for professional experience in the Bachelor of Education (Birth to Five Years) degree. This degree requires four professional experience placements to be undertaken:

- EMH302: Pedagogy of Relationships (10 days embedded in an Early Childhood service)*
- EPT308: Infant Pedagogy for 0-2 years (20-day extended placement in 0–2-year setting)
- EPT326: Early Childhood Professional Practice (40-day extended placement in 3-5 years setting, reduced to 20 days under an approval process- see below)
- EEB427: Leading Early Childhood (10 days embedded in an Early Childhood service)*

**If currently employed in an Early Childhood service the placement for these subjects EMH302 and EEB427 can be performed within that service or a service where placement has previously been performed.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the Professional Experience Handbook for a comprehensive understanding of all placement requirements undertaken within a Charles Sturt University initial teacher education degree.

Whilst completing placements for EPT308 and EPT326, you should be aware that:

- As a student you **cannot** be counted in the ratio for the provision of service within an Early Childhood setting
- As a student you **cannot** receive remuneration whilst on placement
- The service you source must be either a **meeting** or **exceeding** against the National Quality Standard

Administrative information for students

Starting and completing placement

Step 1: Preparing for placement

To prepare for your placement it is essential that you log into the InPlace placement management system to upload all the mandatory documents (evidence that all required checks and training are completed) and use the self-placement tool to submit an application.

- Working with Children Check (WWCC) (upload a document)
- Student Placement Guidelines (read and acknowledge agreement)
- Conflict of Interest Declaration x 3 (read the statements and acknowledge agreement)
- Geccko Training Certificate (upload a document)

Click here for instructions on using InPlace and applying for your placement

Student placement tab

Click here for information on Student compliance tab

In order to avoid a personal conflict of interest, you are advised that you are unable to complete an extended placement in an early childhood setting where:

- You are presently employed or volunteer.
- You have been employed or worked as a volunteer in the previous 2 years.
- Your own child or a close relative attends the service.
- A close relative either as a teacher, educator or as a member of the non-teaching staff is employed at the service.

In addition, you are advised that you are required to:

- Ensure the room you are completing your placement in has a minimum of 5 children within the focus age group of your placement.
- Make every possible attempt to complete your two extended placements (EPT308 and EPT326) at **different services** as this will provide a broader scope of experiences. If this is not possible you will need to be granted a Work Integrated Approval (WIL) by the Early Childhood Professional Experience Liaison Officer (ECPELO).
- Commence placement no sooner than **Week 2** of the University session and your early childhood service has been approved by the Workplace Learning Team.
- Ensure your placement days are **more focused post** any required or approved break in placement. i.e. session three (90) should be fewer placement days before the required Christmas/New Year Shutdown period.
- Ensure the supervising teacher is a **qualified ECT** (Bachelor degree) of **twelve (12) months or more.**

Sister service work placement

Students can perform placement in a service owned by their employee if they have not previously worked in that service and all other requirements are upheld regarding conflict of interest, ratio, renumeration and NQF accreditation. Students can only perform **one** placement in a sister service, in which they are affiliated through employment.

Reduction process (EPT326 3 to 5 yr. old placement only)

You should begin your application for a reduction from 40 days to 20 days for EPT326 when you receive the introductory email sent by Workplace Learning for your enrolled session. This process is now part of the EPT326 In Place self-application, ensure you specify yes or no to – Are you applying for a Reduction of Placement Days.
You must have performed the role of Room Leader, Educational Leader, Director, Diploma Trained Educator (with evidence of programming and planning responsibilities) or Early Childhood related role (e.g. TAFE) Family Day Care Educator for an accumulated period of 12 months or more within the last 10 years. The application **must** be completed by a qualified Bachelor trained early childhood teacher

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Approval

The requirements for a maximum of **one** Work Integrated Approval are:

- Graduating in the current session upon completion of Professional Experience Placement.

AND

- Work in a remote area and accessing alternative placement locations are restricted by distance/proximity.

OR

- Restricted ability to travel due to a physical injury or serious illness that requires access to medical facilities.

Students should be aware that the existing requirements still exist.

- They will not be paid OR counted in ratio.
- They will not be placed in the existing class/room they are employed.
- That the service must be rated as 'Meeting' or 'Exceeding' the National Quality Standards

AND

- That an External Mentor will be appointed by Charles Sturt University as the Early Childhood Teacher supporting and supervising the placement.

Any student requesting a WIL Approval should develop a professionally composed email to the Subject Coordinator and the Early Childhood Professional Experience Liaison Officer outlining.

a. SURNAME/First name, Student number and Subject code WIL Application in the subject line
b. A clear and succinct explanation of the circumstances to the application with the service name, address and Accreditation rating stated.
c. A statement acknowledging that the student is aware that an External Mentor will be appointed and that they will not be renumerated or counted in the ration whilst on placement.

Step 2: On extended placement

You should be familiar with the learning and teaching activities that are expected of you whilst on placement. These are provided in the Progression of Teaching at the end of this guide.

Whilst on placement you should also aim to become part of the staff as soon as possible by undertaking your duties in a professional manner. You are regarded as a temporary member of staff and, accordingly, should observe the same conditions as your mentor.

- Wear your university student ID card in a clear plastic lanyard or clear plastic name badge during visits and placements.
- Present the following to the EC service prior to commencing the placement:
    - Working with Children Check clearance notice

    - Letter of Introduction
    - Permission to Observe Forms
    - Insurance Letter
- Adhere to all Early Childhood Service policies and procedures.
- Keep your email and internet usage to a minimum and only for professional experience.
- Dress in a way which is acceptable to the Early Childhood Service at which you are placed.
- Ensure that your mentor can be present for **at least 4 out of 5 days** a week of your placement.
- In the event of any unplanned absences by the mentor then it is requested that you advise your University Liaison Officer (ULO) immediately who will make suitable academic arrangements for you during the mentor's absence.
- Organise your hours of placement schedule, which needs to be a minimum of two (2) consecutive days per week (i.e. Monday & Tuesday) for **eight (8) hours per day** (including break times and one hour planning time) and complete your schedule on InPlace daily.
- Confirm that your mentor has been able to access the mentor webpage detailing the placement.
- Confirm expected hours of work; where to go and who to contact upon arrival.
- Maintain a high level of professionalism during the placement; including maintaining a level of confidentiality about your experiences and being judicious about any information conveyed to others outside of the EC service.
- Contribute to professional practice by taking the initiative in offering to undertake additional responsibilities and extra activities.

At the ***mid-point of the placement***, you should also ensure that you participate in a collaborative review of the progress made on your placement with your supervising teacher and review progress against the focus areas of the Professional Experience Report and your Professional Experience Goals.

Difficulties and obtaining assistance

If you are experiencing difficulties, you should make use of all personnel who are able to help. A suggested order of the people who should be approached in the event of difficulties being experienced is as follows:

- Mentor (ST) /External Mentor (EM)
- Director of the service
- University Liaison Officer (ULO)
- Subject Coordinator
- Early Childhood Professional Liaison Officer (ECPELO)

If serious problems arise, you or your mentor (ST) should contact the Workplace Learning Team immediately at FOAE-WPL@csu.edu.au

If you are experiencing difficulty with your Mentor (ST) or Director, initial contact should be made with the ULO. If you have been appointed an EM, contact the ECPELO should issues arise.

Media use on placement:

It is recommended that the National Model Code be adhered to whilst on extended placement and thus the below recommendations should be practised.

- only service-issued devices should be used to take photos and/or videos of children.
- personal electronic devices that can take and/or record images are **not to be carried** when providing ECEC, unless for authorised essential purposes such as emergencies, health and family needs.
- strict controls should be in place for storing and retaining children's images and recordings.
- only service-issued / approved devices may be used in centre-based services when taking / recording / recording images or videos of children, with further requirements for approved providers to have strict controls in place for the appropriate storage and retention of images (Recommendation 2.3), and
- anyone who is working or engaged in a centre-based service in any capacity is prohibited from having personal electronic devices that can take images or video, such as tablets, phones and smart watches, on their person whilst with children (Recommendation 2.4).

Please refer to this link for more details

https://www.acecqa.gov.au/latest-news/National-Model-Code-Taking-images-in-early-childhood-education-and-care

Charles Sturt University Academic Progress Regulations

It is sometimes the case that you may experience difficulty in demonstrating sufficient progress towards meeting the standard required while on placement. In these circumstances, you may be placed “at risk” of failing and a Developmental Support Plan may be implemented. This process is outlined in the Bachelor of Education (Birth to Five years) Service mentor tab

While every endeavour will be made to assist you, a grade of ‘unsatisfactory’ may still be awarded if you have not demonstrated the standards required by the end of the placement. As professional experience subjects are regarded as indicators of professional suitability, a failure in the professional experience component will mean you have not met an essential element of the Academic Progress Regulations and you may be required to complete further professional experience.

Absences

Public Holidays:

If any public holidays (for example, Australia Day, Easter, ANZAC Day, Queen's Birthday, etc.) fall during the placement period, for students completing placement on a full-time pattern, **ONE** of these days' can be counted as an exemption from placement. This means that this **ONE** day does **NOT** need to be made up. Any additional public holidays must be made up by the student. Note that these public holidays **DO NOT** include the University-wide shutdown period over Christmas and New Year.

A public holiday **cannot** be used as a make-up, leave of absence day post approved placement dates.

Christmas and New Year University shutdown period:

Students **MUST NOT** attend placement during the annual University-wide shutdown period, even if their placement service is in operation. The University is shut down and therefore students are not covered by university insurance during this time. Additionally, student support, WPL, lecturers, and ULOs are not available during this time. Further procedures regarding the notification and documentary evidence of an absence can be located in the Professional Experience Handbook :Attendance (Permitted days absent)

Leave of absence:

Students **MUST** attend placement on ALL the specified days lodged into their InPlace self-application. In the event that you require leave of absence you must notify the placement service, the University Liaison Officer (ULO) and the Workplace Learning Team via FOAE-WPL@csu.edu.au. All completed and signed Leave of Absence forms **MUST** be uploaded to Brightspace with your Final Report.

Contact details

If you have any queries or would like further information about this placement, please contact the appropriate person:

Subject Coordinator	Workplace Learning Team (WPLT)	Early Childhood Professional Experience Liaison Officer (ECPELO)	University Liaison Officer (ULO) OR External Mentor (EM)
Responsible for: The academic aspects of the subject.	Responsible for: The administration and approval of the placement; communication with the approved service. (WPLT)	Responsible for: The additional approval aspects of your placement. Approvals for Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and/or Reduction of days for EPT326 and External Mentor (EM) appointments	Responsible for: The University's representative during placement.
The Subject Coordinator can help with: Questions about the Subject Outline, Brightspace, Learning Modules, Resources, Assessment Items and anything about the **learning** you will do in this ***subject***.	The Workplace Learning Team can help with: Compliance, mandatory documentation and InPlace support. Sister service approvals* Part-time attendance to placement approvals* Unexpected changes in mentor or attendance dates during the period of the placement *Are aspects of the self-application for placement in InPlace	The Early Childhood Professional Experience Liaison Officer can help with: Questions concerning placement, approvals for authorised changes to placement conditions (as above). Support with issues relating to university placement personnel e.g., ULO's or EM's	The ULO/EM can help you with: Questions about placement and the teaching progression, mid and final reports, attendance, at risk procedures etc.
Please check the subject Brightspace site for Subject Coordinator details.	Workplace Learning Officer FOAE-WPL@csu.edu.au	Early Childhood Professional Experience Liaison Officer (ECPELO) FOAE-WPL@csu.edu.au	Your ULO/EM will contact you prior to the commencement of your placement and three times during your placement.

Summary of expectations in professional experience

Learning and teaching activities

You MUST be proactive in your own learning. This means that you must seek out your mentor every day and provide them with your professional experience folder with documentation of the children's learning, and the intentional teaching plan/s for children's learning prior to teaching. It is an expectation that learning experiences are planned and discussed with the mentor prior to the implementation of each learning experience.

Forward planning and organisation are essential for your successful completion of professional experience placements. Please leave your folder on the bench in the room in which your mentor works. There is a possibility the mentor may be working in another room to you. It is important you take responsibility for your learning and work, ensuring you are proactive in seeking supervision and mentorship.

Professional experience documentation

It is essential for you to always have your documentation complete, up-to-date and organised. During your placement, you are required to maintain your documentation in a professional experience folder in a tidy and professional manner. This folder needs to be accessible to your mentor and ULO throughout the placement. Please do not leave your documentation on your iPad or Laptop or at home. Your work needs to be printed off every night and placed as a hard copy in your folder. You may also be asked to send through a sample of documentation to your ULO through the placement.

For EPT326 and EPT308, you are granted one (1) hour each full day of placement for planning and writing up documentation. This time can be taken at any time during the day in consultation with your Mentor.

Additionally, you will be required to access the CSU Brightspace subject site for information on documentation of children's learning, planning appendices and announcements.

During the final week of your placement, the professional experience folder must be submitted to your mentor for review. **It should NOT be returned to the University.**

Teaching progression

The professional experience placements within the Bachelor of Education (Birth to Five Years) degree have different expectations for the progression of teaching you are expected to undertake to meet placement requirements. You can access the progression of teaching relevant to your professional experience subject by entering the Brightspace subject site in the session you are enrolled in.

EPT308: Infant Pedagogy for 0-2 years

EPT326: Early Childhood Professional Practice (20 Days)

EPT326: Early Childhood Professional Practice (40 Days)

The requirements for ten-day embedded placements **EMH302** and **EEB427** will be outlined in the subject course sites on Brightspace.