



Charles Sturt  
University

# Social Work Field Education Handbook

Faculty of Arts and Education, Workplace Learning  
(WPL)  
Charles Sturt University

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## 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 – our staff and students. All parties work together to create the optimum environment for your professional learning, and to assess your performance and achievements.

Field Education is one particular subject that all students remember. It is the place where professional identity, skills and knowledge come together. This is your opportunity to find out if social work is really the career for you; it is 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 enrol, subject materials, assessment information and resources will be available through the subject Brightspace site.

Best wishes for a rewarding learning experience.

## **Lisa Campbell**

**Associate Head of School Workplace Learning & Partnerships (Social Work & Human Services)**

School of Social Work and Arts | Faculty of Arts and Education | Workplace Learning (WPL)

# Contact

## Workplace Learning Team (WPLT)

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# 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 (PPA Strand)**. *Please be aware that these two strands have different assessment items and submission dates and only apply to Field Education 1*

- **Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW)** – Professional body for social workers in Australia. They are also the professional accreditor of social work courses in Australia.
- **Placement Strand** – students undertake a structured, individualised period of experiential learning in an approved real world work site, under the supervision of a qualified social worker.
- **Professional Practice Assessment Strand (PPA 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. Several assessment tasks underpin the assessment of prior experience and learning.
- **Social Work Field Education and Workplace Learning** – Both terms mean the same thing. Social Work Field Education is the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) reference to placement while Workplace Learning is the generic term Charles Sturt University uses in all placement activities.
- **Placement vs Practicum** – Both terms mean the same thing. Placement is the newer term used by the AASW.
- **Workplace Learning (WPL), Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and Field Education** – are all relevant. Workplace Learning is an activity included in a broader range of authentic, roles specific learning activities known as Work Integrated Learning. WIL is a national term used by National bodies such as, [TEQSA](#), [ACEN](#) and [NAFEA](#).
- **Social Work Supervisor vs Field Educator** – Both terms mean the same thing. The current term is Field Educator to reflect the education role of a supervisor. Your Field Educator includes Onsite, Co-onsite and/or Offsite Supervisor who are involved in your student placement. This person is a qualified social worker who has at least 2 years practice experience and is eligible for membership of the AASW.
- **Task Supervisor** – this is a term used to differentiate between the social work qualified supervisor and the agency based supervisor, who may be qualified in a human services field of practice but is not a social worker.

# Field Education Subjects

## Pre-Requisite Subjects/Knowledge for Field Education

Students undertaking their first placement must have satisfactorily completed the first Theory and Practice subject (HCS200 & HCS507). In some circumstance's 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 Subject Coordinators discretion. Decision making around this takes 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 case management/counselling skills.

Field Education 1 students (HCS323 or HCS525) must pass Assessment 1 to be eligible to progress to their placement opportunity. This means that first placements cannot commence before late April.

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

## Courses served by social work field education subjects

In the 1502SW Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and 1708PQ Master of Social Work (Professional Qualifying) (MSW PQ), there are two social work field education subjects. You are required to successfully complete a total of **1000 hours** Social Work Field Education time (approximately 144 days).

Other courses that may also participate in Field Education include the 1419HS Bachelor of Human Services (BHS) and 1715CA Master in Child and Adolescent Welfare (MCAW).

## Subject Codes

Note:

- Planning is subject to agency availability/placement opportunities.
- Placements outside the official session dates are subject to Associate Head of School approval.

The subjects are:

### Bachelor of Social Work

HCS323	Social Work Field Education 1
HCS411	Social Work Field Education 2
HCS424	Social Work Field Education 2 (this is a single session subject offered in Session 30 only)

### Masters of Social Work (PQ)

HCS525	Social Work Field Education 1
HCS526	Social Work Field Education 2
HCS524	Social Work Field Education 2 (this is a single session subject offered in Session 30 only)

## HCS424 or HCS524 - Session 30 ONLY

Eligibility to complete HCS424 or HCS524 in place of HCS411 (BSW) or HCS526 (MSWPQ) needs to be approved by your Course Director. You can do this by contacting [FOAE-Course@csu.edu.au](mailto:FOAE-Course@csu.edu.au)

HCS424 or HCS524 is a single session 16-point subject which is only available in Session 30 each year. It is specifically for students who on completion of the placement and completion of any other Session 30 subjects, will complete their course and be eligible for Conferral (to graduate).

# Field Education Requirements

The Social Work Field Education 1 and Social Work Field Education 2 subjects must be completed in separate calendar years. Field Education subjects are year-long. The exception to this is HCS424 and HCS524 as explained above.

Students who are scheduled to graduate at the completion of their final placement must ensure they have completed all assessments within the session of enrolment, or if extending past the session end date be aware of Conferral dates and graduation ceremony closure dates. It is critical to allow for marking and the process of grades for graduation.

Upon enrolment in the subject, compliance and registration steps will be communicated to students by the Workplace Learning Office via email. Students may be deemed unsatisfactory in the subject if they fail to complete these steps in the required time frame.

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

## InPlace Placement Software

[InPlace software](#) is the online system used to coordinate student placement arrangements. Students use InPlace to upload compliance documentation, monitor placement arrangements and view placement information (including agency, supervisor contact and the placement hours).

## Staffing in Workplace Learning (WPL)

Upon enrolment in any Field Education subject, you will liaise with several Academic staff who will teach, support, and mentor you through your learning journey in your placement. It is important to familiarise yourself initially with each role and their responsibilities. The information listed below provides you with an overview of the different Academic roles within Social Work and Human Services.

## Associate Head of School

The Associate Head of School Workplace Learning, Social Work and Human Services 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.
- Development of field education policy and curriculum.
- Coordination of Placement Establishment Academics (PEA), Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO) and Offsite Social Work (OS) supervising staff.
- Mediating resolutions in cases where difficulties arise in a placement which cannot be resolved by the student, field education liaison officer (FELO) staff and field educator/s.
- Involvement in field education research.
- Approval of placement in student's place of work.
- Approval of variations to placements.
- Quality assurance and continuous improvement.
- Partnerships and stakeholder relationships.
- Ensuring the program adheres to the Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (ASWEAS) 2024.

## Workplace Learning Coordinator (WPLC)

Responsibilities include:

- Support and assistance to students, field educators and academic staff.
- Determination of grades.
- Problem solving and mediation if you and/or your Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO) person or Field Educator have a problem that you can't solve together.
- Subject coordination.
- Responsible for coordinating the professional placement arrangements for the students.
- Establishing professional placement arrangements (PEA role).
- Field Education Liaison.

## Placement Establishment Academic (PEA)

Responsibilities include:

- Responsible for establishing the professional placement arrangements for the students.
- Supporting students prior to the placement interview.
- Liaising with the host agency and the student around potential placements to enhance the student practice experience.
- Discuss the student's vision for the type of placement they would like, and endeavours to take this into account when matching students and host agencies.
- Finalising the student placement details and managing all student records on InPlace



- Ensuring the placement meets the ASWEAS Field Education accreditation requirements
- Working collaboratively with all WPL staff.

## Workplace Learning Officer (WPLO)

Responsibilities include:

- First point of contact for any Field Education enquiries.
- Maintains all files and records relating to placement.
- Facilitates compliance and registration steps for students.
- Liaising and escalation of concerns to appropriate Academic staff.

# Field Education roles during Placement Strand

## Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO)

For each placement you undertake, you will be assigned a Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO). You will be advised in a confirmation email from WPLO or InPlace the name and contact details for your Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO).

The following explains how they will support you during your placement:

- Promoting a consultative process between the onsite and/or offsite field educator, and the student to discuss learning processes, structure and assessment of the placement.
- Maintaining regular contact with the student, with a minimum of three contacts (First, Mid and Final Liaison meetings). These meetings are essential as they clarify educational issues, monitor the progress of the placement, mediate any difficulties, and assess student progress.
- Being available for any informal contacts throughout the placement as you and/or your field educator require.
- Approve any extensions for placement assessments during placement.
- Considers re-negotiating time frames of placements including notification of absences and extension of placement length.
- Marking of placement reports and recommendation of grade to the subject coordinator.
- Ensuring the placement meets the ASWEAS Field Education Standards.

## Social Work Field Education Supervision

In all accredited Australian Social Work Field Education subjects, each student 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 must have a commitment to continuing professional education and an interest in developing social work knowledge and skills.

Below lists how they will support you during your placement:

- Provides a minimum of 1.5 hours of supervision for every five days (35 hours) of placement. Supervision can be a combination of face-to-face and/or via video-conferencing, depending on location.

- ❑ Assists students in gaining an understanding of how to map and articulate the AASW Practice Standards against the learning they have gained from their experiences on placement.
- ❑ The Onsite Field Educator is responsible for supervising the student's day-to-day work (that is, line management/task supervision).
- ❑ Attending and providing feedback at three placement meetings (First, Mid and Final Liaison meetings) regarding the student's progress on placement.
- ❑ Provides feedback and recommendation about the student's learning progress and grades to the university.

## Onsite Field Educator

May be a social worker or an experienced non-social work field educator who supervises the student's work onsite. Where the agency onsite supervisor is not a social worker the University will provide a qualified social worker to provide the supervision externally.

Below lists how they will support you during your placement:

- ❑ The Onsite Field Educator is responsible for supervising the student's day-to-day work (that is, line management/task supervision).
- ❑ Attending and providing feedback at three placement meetings (first, mid and final liaison meetings) and contributing feedback in the placement reports regarding the student's progress on placement.
- ❑ The Offsite Supervisor (Social Worker) is usually responsible for the social work side of the education and support functions of supervision, but this is a collaboration between all supervisors. The social work supervisor is responsible for assessing student competency against the AASW Practice Standards.

Both Onsite and Offsite Field Educators contribute to the student placement reports. The Social Work Field Educator is considered to be the primary supervisor in recommending grades to the university.

# Placement Hours

## Placement Strand

In order to successfully complete the placement, social work students will have demonstrated they are developing competency of an entry level social worker in accordance with the AASW Social Work Practice Standards (2023). This includes the assessment, intervention and evaluation methods of social work practice. Placements must take place across different fields of practice ie child and family or mental health, and different practice methodologies ie direct or indirect practice.

Students must successfully complete **1000 hours** of placement which is divided across two placements of 500 hours each. While all students are expected to undertake a placement of 500 hours, there may be extenuating circumstances or unexpected issues that may present on placement.

If personal circumstances have arisen in which you are no longer able to commit to completing 500 hours, it is best practice to consult with your Field Education Liaison (FELO). It is a requirement of the AASW that placement cannot be shorter than 250 hours. If a student's placement has been reduced for any reason, the remaining hours **MUST** be made up in the subsequent placement to ensure they meet the 1000 hours as stated in the AASW accreditation requirements. This may require the student to complete another 250 hour placement, followed by the second 500 hour placement.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Locating a 750-hour placement could pose difficult to secure and could delay your timeline for graduation.

## Length and Timing

Students must successfully complete a minimum of 1,000 hours in at least two field education subjects. These hours must be completed within the normal working hours / days of the organisation hosting the placement. No leave of any kind may be included in this requirement; that is, the full 1,000 hours must be completed.

Placements are usually completed as 2 x 500-hour placements over two separate calendar years. Placement times and length are individually negotiated and agreed upon by the Student, Agency, Field Educator and Charles Sturt University Field Education staff.

Please see the **Timeline** on the website for details of subject requirements and milestones during a placement. This timeline is for a typical 72-day (500 hours) placement.

### Attendance Hours:

An ordinary placement day is generally 7 hours per day and no more than 8 hours per day.

Minimum hours per day is 5 hours to ensure a reasonable period of participation and continuity in practice and learning related activities.

To support work health and safety, and student wellbeing, students may not work more than 8 hours in an ordinary working day on placement and no more than 10 hours including travel.

At minimum students must also take 30 minutes break for lunch and record this on the placement timesheet.

No placement will be less than 250 hours in order to ensure an educationally viable placement and in accordance with the AASW accreditation requirements.

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

A minimum of 15 hours per week 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. Part-time placements are subject to agency approval.

**Please Note:** Public holidays or absences due to sickness or other causes must be made up so that the negotiated number of hours on placement are 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.

## 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 the Field Education Liaison 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 must be firstly approved by the onsite field educator, Field Education Liaison or Associate Head of School.

A record of attendance must be maintained and submitted to the FELO at mid and end of placement. This should be signed by the student and supervisor. 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. ie workplaces may have a common sign in book, this cannot be copied and if necessary, you may need to use a personal recording system in addition to the agency one

The AASW requires the University to maintain a signed record of attendance for each placement.

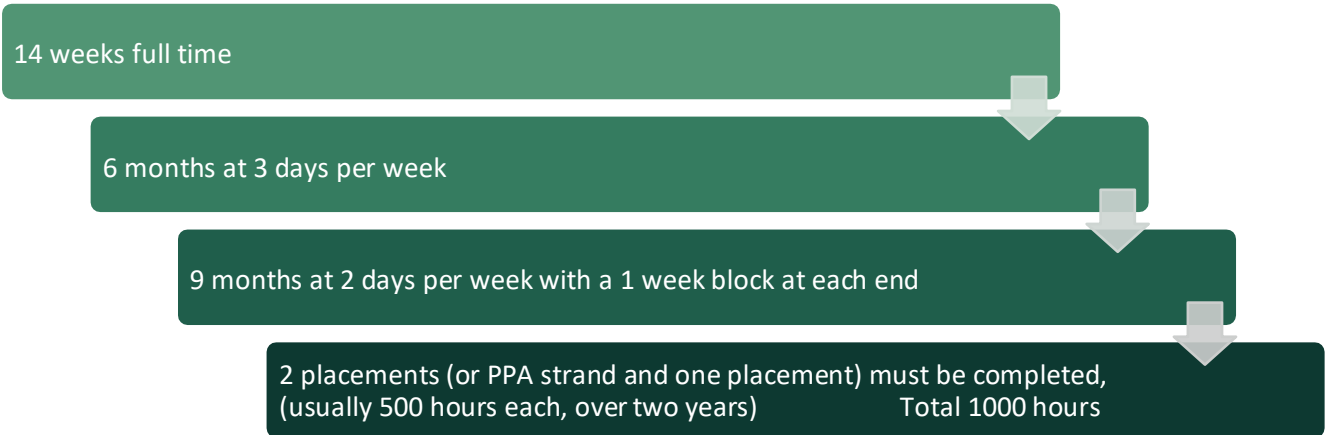
## Professional Practice Assessment (PPA) Strand

Students undertaking the PPA strand for their first placement, must do either 500-600 hours in their second field education placement, depending on their level of attainment within the standards.

Please refer to your Subject Outline in Brightspace once session commences for assessment information.

### Time periods for placement

Each placement is approximately 72 days (500 hours). These calculations are



# Types of Placements

Each student must have placements in at least two settings and in two different fields of practice. Practice settings for field education are usually agencies in which social workers are employed or could be employed in.

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** eg. Casework, counselling, case management etc. The other must have a primary focus on **Indirect Practice Activities** such as community development, policy or 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, and what is available within their local region.

## Indirect Practice: Community Development, Policy or Research Emphasis

Indirect practice includes, community development, policy work, administration, research, task focused group work or specific projects negotiated with field education staff. PPA strand is considered an Indirect placement.

**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, eg. 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 eg. 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.

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

- Undertake an evaluation of a group program or element of service delivery.
- Complete a review and analysis of policy.
- Evaluate particular resources.
- Develop an evaluation criteria.
- Facilitate or co facilitate groups focused on change.
- Facilitate feedback sessions and focus groups.
- 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 approval from the [Charles Sturt University ethics committee](#).

## Direct Practice: Clinical, Casework, Counselling Emphasis

Direct practice includes 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.

In these placements, achieving practice standards in the intervention and evaluation could include the above as well as being able to:

- Provide direct services to clients within the identified case plan
- Evaluate practice against standards provided in the sector, agency and AASW
- Facilitate or co-facilitate group work that has a focus on change

# 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 approved circumstances a placement opportunity may be undertaken in an agency where employment or voluntary work is being, or has recently been, undertaken. This depends if all other AASW requirements for field education are met. Any placement undertaken in a student's place of employment or voluntary work will be for a maximum of 72 days (500 hours). If you complete the PPA strand it may not be possible for you to complete a placement in your place of work if this is the same practice context

In these circumstances, the PEA and WPLC will make a recommendation to the Associate Head of School. Generally, this is based on the PEA/WPLC being satisfied that the following conditions have been met:

- The student will have appropriate learning opportunities and educational goals, and 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 student is not carrying any of their usual workload or 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).

- Participation in a meeting with the workplace management and the University to assess the viability of the placement offer

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 WPLC. It involves a written agreement (as per point 6 above) between the employing agency and Charles Sturt University. A placement will not be established in a student's place of employment unless all the conditions, stated above, can be met.

The Agency Agreement for Social Work Placement in Student's Place of Work form is reviewed and final approval is sought from the Associate Head of School. All parties are to discuss the placement plan and to sign an agreement for meeting the above conditions.

Note: If you feel you meet all or most of the above conditions you are welcome to put your request to the PEA and Associate Head for consideration and further discussion.

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

## Professional Practice Assessment (PPA) Strand and Recognition of Prior Learning

Charles Sturt university does not grant Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for work or volunteer related activities. Instead, students who may be eligible for RPL can apply for entry into the Professional Practice Assessment (PPA) Strand. The PPA Strand allows eligible students to complete the equivalent of one placement through assessment of prior professional practice experience. Through structured and developmental assessments, student competence is assessed against the AASW Practice Standards. The PPA Strand is available for the Bachelor of Social Work and the Masters of Social Work (Professional Qualifying). The PPA strand is ONLY available to students who are enrolled in the Social Work Field Education 1 subjects (HCS323 or HCS525).

This is usually considered to be an **Indirect** placement experience and your first agency-based placement is likely to include a Direct practice focus.

You must be enrolled in the first Field Education 1 subject and have completed the compliance and registration steps. The AASW does not permit any credit for life experience for field education. PPA is not available for the Social Work Field Education 2 subject.

To meet the minimum eligibility requirement to participate in the PPA strand students must have undertaken: 3 years full time equivalent (FTE) in a "relevant context" in the last seven years; of which one year FTE has been in the last three years. **Please Note:** 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 counselling position.

To determine your eligibility for the PPA strand or to obtain further information please access the [PPA Process information sheet](#).

# Professional Practice Assessment (PPA) Strand Roles

## Professional Practice Assessment Eligibility Assessor (PPA Eligibility Assessor)

The Professional Practice Assessment Eligibility Assessor is responsible for determining a student's eligibility for the Professional Practice Assessment Strand (PPA Strand).

## Professional Practice Academic (PPA Academic)

The Professional Placement Academics are responsible for assessing a student's Assessments, including the Reflection on Practice Essays, Professional Practice Report and Presentation/Practice Interview and Orientation Plan (Assessment 1). It is a requirement of the AASW that all interviews be conducted by two Social Work Academics, who have at least 5 years practice experience and have experience in social work field education.

# Placement Readiness

## Assessment 1 and 2

All students undertaking a placement for the first time at Charles Sturt University must complete the Wellbeing and Workplace Learning self-paced online modules, and the *Placement Preparation and Orientation Plan* (Assessment 1). This is usually completed in HCS323 or HCS525. These assessments provide reflective activities and thinking to assess a student's readiness for placement. This is also completed by students who do the PPA Strand – however it may be in a different order. For all assessments, please refer to the subject outlines available from Brightspace subject site. Students may be required to re-do these assessments where they have two or more years between the field education subjects.

## Preparing for Your Social Work Field Education Experience

- Think about the kinds of learning experiences that you will participate in;
- Assess your existing skills and identify gaps which will make you more employable;
- Consider the type of supervision which works best for you;
- Be open to new opportunities
- Review previous subjects you have undertaken that may be helpful to your placement experience.
- Apply particular attention to theory and practice subjects, including your skills workshops, and consider how you will integrate your classroom learning with the practice learning in field education.

## Negotiating Your Placement

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

While we endeavour to source placements for students within the academic year, high numbers of students seeking placements from all Universities across Australia. In some instances, depending on your location, it may be even difficult to source a placement for you. In some remote locations social workers may not be available. Charles Sturt University will do what we can to support placements, but we are limited by the options available in your community. Your Subject Coordinator and the PEA are the staff to discuss this with. Please remember that Charles Sturt University is committed to sourcing you a placement and your cooperation and understanding about these issues are appreciated.



Each year Charles Sturt University offers placements which include accommodation. If you are in a remote location or interested in the opportunity to experience working with a remote community, it may be worthwhile to consider one of these options. 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.

Negotiating placements involves a collaborative process between Charles Sturt University, students, agencies, and field educators. **The final responsibility for endorsing each placement rests with Charles Sturt University**

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 canvas agencies for field placements**. This is a serious matter and students who do canvas can face disciplinary action.

## The Placement Process

Once you are enrolled in a Field Education subject the Workplace Learning Office (WPLO) will email you instructions to complete the self placement and upload mandatory compliance documents directly to [InPlace](#).

### Step 1

**ALL students are required to complete the self placement and upload the mandatory documents.**

1. Resume / CV (**mandatory**) (please ensure this is current and professionally set out)
2. National Police Check (NPC) (**mandatory**)

**NOTE:** Not more than 3 years old from date of issue, as of 31/12/2020. Agencies may request students to supply a more recent NPC.

**Recommended where relevant to placement goals:**

- Working with Children Check (WWCC) (**mandatory**) or equivalent for your state (to be eligible for child related placements).
- Relevant vulnerable persons clearance (aged care and disability sector.)
- COVID Vaccinations.
- NSW Health Compliance package. (to be eligible for health facilities) e.g. hospitals, community health or aged care) **NOTE:** start this early as it can take up to 6 months to finalise. Students in VIC, TAS, WA, QLD, and SA will also need to provide additional documents.

**Note:** Original documents must be provided to the agency in the pre-placement interview.

**Registration information** details are provided by using the Self Placement tool. Self Placement does not mean you can source your own placements, Charles Sturt University will source the placement for you. **Students are not to canvas their own placements**. This is an opportunity for you to provide potential contacts and nominate your preferred locations. Please refer to the attached guides in the emails from the WPLO.

Placements in Field Education 1 will not commence until May, subject to the satisfactory completion of placement preparation and integration assessments (Assessments 1 & 2 in Field Education 1).

**NOTE:** Students who have not previously undertaken a placement at Charles Sturt University; have completed or it has been more than two years since the assessment was originally completed, are required to complete the Field Education 1 preparation assessments.

## Step 2

The WPL Co-ordinator will assign a Placement Establishment Academic (PEA) to you and they will contact you to arrange an interview. During this meeting, the PEA will ask about the types of learning experiences you wish to gain, what existing skills you have, what learning experiences are available in varying host agencies, your learning needs and any required adjustments that may support you in your placement.

If you have a current Study Access Plan please ensure you have this updated to include adjustments or support required in workplace learning.

If you have accessibility or inclusion support requirements please speak to your PEA and the CSU Accessibility and Inclusion Team, email [access@csu.edu.au](mailto:access@csu.edu.au).

## Step 3

The PEA will then determine placement options and may use the online **Inplace section** on the Self Placement Form or email you to communicate options, changes and updates.

The PEA will make contact with the student to provide details of a potential agency/organisation willing to host a social work student placement. It is the student's role to make contact with the nominated supervisor to arrange their pre-placement interview. This pre-placement interview does not guarantee a placement.

Prior to the interview, the student will be provided a **Student Checklist form** to take with them into the interview to record details about the placement.

## Step 4

Once the student submits the Student Checklist form to their PEA, the PEA uploads this information onto InPlace for processing. A Student Placement Agreement will also need to be arranged between CSU and the host agency.

The PEA advises the WPLO, details about the student's placement and start date. The WPLO requires a minimum of 15 working days' notice, prior to the proposed start date, to process these details and a minimum of 28 days for all health facility placements across Australia.

## Step 5

The WPLO confirms the placement dates with the Agency, Field Educators, Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO) and the Student via email. This confirmation endorses the proposed Social Work Field Education arrangements, advising of the insurance cover and contact details for all involved. The confirmation email includes a link to Field Educator resources available to all parties involved in the student placement.

**The student is then expected to ensure the 10-day first liaison meeting is arranged** with the: Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO) and Supervisors within the **first three days** of placement.

# Compliance

All students are required to supply **mandatory compliance documents** and a **current resume** to be eligible to complete the Field Education subjects. 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. It is the students' responsibility to ensure that current copies of these documents are provided to the WPLO by uploading them to their InPlace self placement at time of registration and that they **remain current for the duration of the placement period.**

## NOTE:

- Agencies may request additional or more recent compliance checks; you will need to comply with that agency's policy if you wish to undertake a placement with them.
- Students are also responsible for declaring any changes immediately relating to compliance documents and status to the WPLO.

## International / Overseas Student Compliance

International / Overseas students seeking placement in Australia, may need to be located in Australia for a minimum of a month to allow for any required applications to be submitted and cleared prior to commencing placement opportunities.

## National Police Checks (NPC)

National Police Check (NPC) (also known as a criminal history check) is a mandatory compliance requirement. Students can [apply online with any accredited body](#). The NPC remains valid for 5 years. Any disclosures can be discussed with the Associate Head of School.

International / Overseas students are required to obtain an Australian National Police Check through an Australian Police Force or an Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Accredited body. Overseas students, in addition to obtaining an Australian Police Certificate, must also obtain National Police Certificates from their home country (including the country in which they currently reside in if different) or any country that they have been residents of for more than six months since turning 18 years of age (translated into English). If they are unable to obtain a National Police Certificate from any of these countries, then they must complete the Template Statutory Declaration before starting their first placement. (The Statutory Declaration must be completed after arrival in NSW.)

## Working With Children (WWC) Checks

Students must make their own application. This should be completed once you have enrolled in your first placement subject. A WWC Check remains valid for 5 years. The NSW online application form can be found at [Service NSW, WWCC](#). Students in other states need to provide their state equivalent.

## Health Compliance (Immunisations)

The NSW Health compliance package is mandatory to be eligible for placement opportunities in health facilities eg. hospitals, aged care or community centres). All Charles Sturt University students considering eligibility to complete a placement in a health facility regardless of their residing state, MUST also be registered with NSW Health and meet the [NSW Health compliance guidelines](#).

This meets two purposes:

- Enables eligibility to register for Field Education placements in health facilities.
- Meets risk compliance assessment requirements for NSW Health, other state health facilities and organisations requiring health compliance.

Students in other states must also provide additional documents for compliance, such as Code of Conduct and evidence of completion of orientation modules.

**Please Note:** Health placements will be cancelled if health compliance is not finalised or your National Police check expires.

Further information on the required documentation is available and updated on the [Workplace Learning webpages](#).

When you have completed NSW Health package you will need to upload this as **one file** to [InPlace](#) in order for this to be verified by a NSW Health Clinical Placements Coordinator.

Please consult with your health provider or general practitioner (GP) for professional medical advice.

# Professional Behaviour

## Ethical Behaviour

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 could include behaviours such as racist comments, breaching confidentiality of the host agency and/or clients. You must 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 placement student, and a professional in training, it is important that you comply with the universities policies around student behaviour as outlined previously. In addition, many of you will also need to comply with specific agency requirements around behaviour. Failure to comply can result in an unsatisfactory grade for the subject. This extends to behaviour 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:**

1. 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. Please ensure you review the [Charles Sturt University, Student Charter](#);
2. The tone of communication between teaching (academic) staff and students should be mutually respectful. Please refer to the [Academic Communication with Students Policy](#).
3. All communication with the Workplace Learning Office and Academics must include your full name, your student identification number and field education subject code. It must be written in professional style and not as a text message.

# Workplace Health and Safety (WHS)

An important part of your safety is getting to and from workplace learning safely. As part of Charles Sturt University'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.

Students should spend no more than ten (10) hours of combined work and travel per day, if the person working is also the person driving. A placement day should not exceed 8 hours and a lunch break must be taken.

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 need to report to the University any incident, accident or potential hazard, as soon as practicable, by using the [Report an incident online form](#).

## Equal Opportunity and Anti-discrimination Policies

Students are required upon commencing placement to become familiar with the agency's Equal Opportunity and Anti-discrimination policies. You can also refer to the [Charles Sturt University, Equal Opportunity policy](#).

## Disclosure of Personal Information, Health & Wellbeing

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, Charles Sturt University staff need to be aware of any personal issues or conditions of the student that could adversely affect the experience of undertaking placement. Students are advised that going on placement may be a challenging experience and they are expected to be responsible for their conduct and self-care whilst on placement.

If you have a condition of any kind (a mental health issue, a learning disability, or 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 commence a placement. Together with your PEA, there are opportunities to formulate strategies that will help you to manage it constructively.

If you have a current Study Access Plan please ensure you have this updated to include adjustments or support required in workplace learning.

If you have accessibility or inclusion support requirements please speak to your PEA and the CSU Accessibility and Inclusion Team, email [access@csu.edu.au](mailto:access@csu.edu.au).

# Privacy Considerations

The University will handle student information according to the [Privacy Management Plan](#).

Use of the Charles Sturt University InPlace System, is subject to you consenting to providing some of your information to external agencies. It is the student's responsibility to determine the necessity for this disclosure.

When you log into InPlace, you would have agreed to the following:

- Release relevant information concerning professional placements to relevant placement agencies as necessary;
- Advise external agencies, prior to the commencement of the professional placement, whether you have a current [National Police Check](#) and whether it contains any disclosable outcomes. **Please Note:** it is your responsibility to have a current National Police Check at the commencement of each academic year and produce a copy for the relevant placement agency as required (excluding the Faculty of Education students);
- Advise external agencies, prior to the commencement of the professional placement, whether you have a current [Service NSW, WWCC](#).  
**Note:** it is your responsibility to have current WWC at the commencement of the academic year and present this upon request from a relevant placement agency as required;
- Release contact details (telephone & mobile number; student email address and address where appropriate) to external supervisors/agencies for professional placement purposes only.

**Please Note: Information provided to the placement agency is managed by the agency and governed by their privacy and confidentiality policies.**

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they understand that a breach of the Terms and Conditions as agreed to in InPlace, may impact on the right to privacy and may lead to legal and/or disciplinary proceedings.

## Reporting Adverse Incidents

The University has a duty of care in relation to the health and safety of its staff and students. Harassment that occurs within Charles Sturt University or is related to University activities is of concern as it can create an intimidating, hostile, offensive or distressing work or study environment and impact on the health and well-being of staff and students.

Students need to report to the University of any incident, accident or potential hazard, as soon as practicable, by using the [Report an incident online form](#).

### Sexual Harassment

If students experience any incidents of Sexual Assault or Sexual Harassment please refer to the web links below. Alternatively, if students need to speak to someone about sexual assault or sexual harassment please **Call Student Wellbeing Line 24/7: 1300 572 516 or Text Student Wellbeing Line 24/7: 0480 087 002**

The Charles Sturt University Student Wellbeing Support Line operates around the clock. You can access immediate and short-term support 24 hours a day, including weekends and public holidays.

### Harassment

**Harassment** refers to unwelcome behaviour that makes a person feel offended, belittled, intimidated or apprehensive; and that a reasonable person, taking into account all the circumstances, would expect to cause offence, intimidation or apprehension and includes bullying and victimisation.

**Bullying** can be described as unreasonable behaviour that intimidates, demeans or humiliates a person, putting their health, safety or welfare (including psychological welfare) at risk.

If you believe that you are being harassed or bullied, you should not ignore the problem. In the first instance, if you feel safe to do so, it may be sufficient to make it clear to the other person their behaviour is unwelcome, offensive or distressing. If you do not feel comfortable with this approach or if it is not effective, you should contact the Associate Head at the University without delay.

For more information and for the guidelines which outline behaviours that constitute sexual, racial, and other forms of harassment covered by legislation, including bullying, and the options for resolving complaints, please refer to the [Charles Sturt University, Policy Library](#).

# Student Placement Support and Review Process (SPSRP)

Should a student experience any difficulties in the professional experience component of Field Education and/or be identified as being "at risk", the Student Placement Support and Review Process (SPSRP) will be instigated.

## Support to the Student and Host Organisation

Occasionally, it is recognised a student's placement can be at risk due to student conduct, host organisational changes and/or unforeseen circumstances. It is recognised by Charles Sturt University a placement which is at risk can cause the student confusion and, at times, distress. On these occasions, the student will be supported by Charles Sturt University staff who are liaising with the student and host organisation. Charles Sturt University staff who support the student placement include the Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO), Workplace Learning Coordinators (WPLC) and Associate Head of School

Charles Sturt University acknowledges and understands the importance of engaging with staff from the host organisation to ensure they are supported in the process of resolving and responding to the presenting issues during a student placement.

The following review process will be facilitated by the Workplace Learning (WPL) Associate Head of School, who will liaise and coordinate with staff to participate in this process.

- It is proposed this activity is conducted in consultation with the Course Director and Associate Head of School Workplace Learning to review the placement concerns;
- The student is notified by the Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO), Workplace Learning Coordinator (WPLC) and/or Associate Head the areas of significant concern related to the placement. The Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO) will provide the Field Education supervisors a copy of the **Mid Placement Field Educators Report** to complete and review;
- The student, Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO) and Field Education supervisors will review the student's **Learning Plan** and identify activities and outcomes to assist the student to make immediate and sustained improvement. The student may also be requested to provide copies of **Journal or Log Submissions** to demonstrate and support their progress. The Subject Coordinators/Convenors and Associate Head will be advised of all concerns, supports and reviews about the student's progress. The Workplace Learning Coordinator (WPLC) will support Liaison and Field Education staff for preliminary concerns. Should the concerns become more complex, they will be escalated to the Associate Head of School for further support and coordination;
- If the student is unable to demonstrate improvement and there are exceptional circumstances associated with the placement, the student may be requested to complete the Summary of Learning and Development and provide copies of their Journal or Log Submission. The assessments will be marked and moderated;
- If the Learning Plan activities and outcomes are demonstrated successfully, the student will receive a progress summary and be expected to satisfactorily complete their placement;
- If the Learning Plan activities and outcomes are not satisfactorily demonstrated, the student will receive an email notification advising the placement has been cancelled from WPLC and the Associate Head will inform the Workplace Learning Coordinator to finalise an unsatisfactory (US) grade for the student's enrolment in the subject.

## Awarding an Unsatisfactory Grade

A student can receive an Unsatisfactory (US) Grade when:

- The student is unable to demonstrate satisfactory progress during the placement after appropriate support has been provided by Charles Sturt University and the Learning Plan is not met or the student has withdrawn from the placement; OR
- The student displays unacceptable professional behaviour, or exhibits behaviour that does not adhere with the [AASW Code of Ethics](#); or Charles Sturt University [Student Charter](#); [Student Misconduct Rule 2020](#).

## Immediate Termination of Placement Process

- A host organisation has the right to terminate a placement at any time. Where unforeseen circumstances or events beyond the control of the Agency cause or threaten major disruption to the provision of Workplace Learning, the Agency may, in its discretion, defer, suspend or amend previously agreed placements by immediate written notice to Charles Sturt University. If the Agency takes such action, the parties agree to work together, in good faith, to arrange alternative placements for those affected students at the Agency.
- This may also be the result of misconduct and can occur without the SPSRP being followed or any warning being given to the student. In this case, a US grade will be awarded following review of the student placement.

## Review of Grade

A student can request a review of grade in line with the Charles Sturt University [Assessment Policy](#) and [complaints processes](#).

# Health Placements

Health placements are highly competitive and most commonly have set commencement and attendance requirements. If you are interested in a health placement please ensure you have all of the mandatory student compliance requirements which are listed at <https://www.heti.nsw.gov.au/Placements-Scholarships-Grants/student-placements/student-compliance>. As Charles Sturt is a University based in NSW you are required to follow the NSW process irrespective of the state in which you reside or wish to complete placement.

Students will not be referred for a health placement if they are not fully compliant and have uploaded their required documentation into the self-placement submission process. If you have questions regarding your health compliance or eligibility for a health placement please contact the Workplace Learning Office at [FOAE-WPL@CSU.edu.au](mailto:FOAE-WPL@CSU.edu.au)

## Note - Department of Health Victoria

At this time Charles Sturt University does not place social work students within Vic Health. This is due to the clinical placement fees attached to allied health placements.

# Placements Incurring Fees

Charles Sturt University does not arrange for social work and human service placements with agencies that charge fees for placements .



# Overseas Placements

This option is limited. The placement must be indirect practice and students will need to have had or have a direct placement with a social worker onsite. Other criteria that is considered:

- Supervision can be arranged which meets AASW accreditation requirements.
- Charles Sturt University staff are convinced, based on discussion, academic records and previous placement reports, that the student has a 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.
- The student must be able to speak the local language.

## **Please Note:**

- a) If you are an Australian resident and have RPL or completed the PPA strand for your first Field Education subject, you are ineligible for an overseas placement. The AASW requires that at least one placement must be completed in Australia.
- b) Students enrolled in HCS424 or HCS524 may not be able to complete an overseas placements due to the limited administration timeframes in a single session.

It may be possible to obtain some funding to assist in overseas placements, for more information you can visit the [Charles Sturt University Office of Global Engagement](#) website.