

ACWA fieldwork placement requirements – Certificates III and IV level courses

1. Background

Fieldwork placements are an important part of a student's education allowing them to experience the frontline tasks of a community worker and to provide the opportunity to develop the practical skills needed in the workplace.

A fieldwork placement should allow a student to integrate theory and practice through range of human services experiences.

Fieldwork placements are neither volunteer nor observational placements, as they involve:

- specific types of tasks;
- supervision by appropriately qualified supervisors; and
- contact between the education provider and the agency at which the fieldwork placement occurs.

Fieldwork placements must be conducted in accordance with these fieldwork placement requirements. ACWA reserves the right to vary these *Fieldwork placement requirements – Certificates III and IV level courses* from time to time.

These guidelines outline the obligations and requirements to be met by education providers in relation to fieldwork placements to gain and maintain accreditation for Certificates III and IV level courses. Course accreditation is only granted to courses at Certificate III or IV level that meet the requirements outlined in this document and *ACWA course and campus accreditation requirements – Certificates III and IV level courses*.

2. Responsibility of education providers

Education providers must:

- a) ensure there is a suitably qualified and experienced fieldwork placement coordinator
- b) ensure that there are sufficient fieldwork placement supervisors for the numbers of students
- c) Ensure that the fieldwork placement supervisor and the fieldwork placement coordinator have a minimum of a Cert IV qualification in a relevant community services discipline, as well as at least three year's broad and relevant practical experience, including direct practice in the subject area of the course
- d) Ensure that all enrolled students are provided with fieldwork placements which comply with the *fieldwork placement requirements – Certificates III and IV level courses*
- e) Arrange fieldwork placements within the designated course duration and in line with the course delivery structure
- f) Monitor and assess the appropriateness of each fieldwork placement, having regard to:
 - (i) the qualifications of the agency fieldwork supervisor/s
 - (ii) the capacity of the agency supervisor to provide adequate supervision to the student

- (iii) the progress of students undertaking the fieldwork placement
- (iv) any complaints made by the agency, agency supervisor or the student in relation to the fieldwork placement
- (v) the relevance and the required skill level of placement tasks in relation to the course.
- (g) Ensure the agency has sufficient information about these fieldwork placement requirements prior to the commencement of a placement

3. Fieldwork placement specifics

3.1 Fieldwork placements for Certificate III must be:

- (a) for a minimum of 80 hours duration and *may* be in two separate placement settings; and
- (b) not less than 40 hours in duration in any one fieldwork placement.

3.2 Fieldwork placements for Certificate IV must be:

- (a) for a minimum of 140 hours duration and in one placement setting

3.3 Fieldwork placements for Certificates III and IV level courses must:

- (a) not occur prior to completion of relevant introductory units; this is to ensure that students are exposed to some of the underpinning practical and theoretical concepts prior to their first fieldwork placement
- (b) occur during normal agency hours when agency staff are present
- (c) not require a student to work more than eight placement hours per day
- (d) occur for a minimum of one full day or two half-days per week
- (e) be controlled by a formal written agreement which details the tasks, roles and responsibilities to be undertaken by the student. This agreement must be signed at the beginning of the placement and signed off at the end of the placement by the student, the agency supervisor, the task supervisor (if applicable) and the fieldwork placement supervisor.

4. Fieldwork placement supervision

In order for a student to obtain the most benefit from a fieldwork placement, the education provider must ensure that the supervision in place at the agency is of an appropriate level as follows:

- (a) The agency supervisor must have a minimum of Certificate IV level qualification in social welfare or community work with a minimum of at least 18 months practical experience in a relevant community services setting.
- (b) The agency supervisor must work on the majority of the days that the student attends the agency, to ensure continuous monitoring of performance and professional progress.

- (c) The fieldwork placement is to be oriented to the student's educational goals.
- (d) A task supervisor must have a minimum of a Cert IV qualification in social welfare, community services or similar and at least 12 months practical experience in a relevant community services setting.
- (e) Any one agency supervisor can supervise up to three students under direct supervision at the same time if:
 - (i) they are employed on the days and times that the students are present;
 - (ii) supervision is a normal part of their role; and
 - (iii) they would have responsibility for the same duties and functions of the agency if the students were not attending.
- (f) An agency supervisor may only supervise more than three students where:
 - (i) the agency supervisor's role as defined by their position description is that of a student supervisor; and
 - (ii) where each student is assigned a suitably qualified task supervisor.

5. Liaison

Liaison between the educational institution, the agency and the student provides a student with the opportunity to raise concerns or ask for external assistance in relation to the fieldwork placement, while also giving the agency an opportunity to provide feedback on the capabilities of the student.

- (a) There must be a minimum of 2 liaison contacts per student for each fieldwork placement. Contact may take a variety of forms and may include but is not limited to face to face, video conferencing and teleconferencing.
- (b) Face to face or video or teleconferencing must involve the student along with the agency supervisor, the task supervisor (where applicable) and the fieldwork placement supervisor.
- (c) The purpose of this requirement is to provide the opportunity to discuss, facilitate and evaluate educational progress of the student and to resolve any problems which may have arisen during the course of a placement.

6. What students should gain from a fieldwork placement

Fieldwork placement is the opportunity for a student to experience different types of community service related work and to use classroom based learning in the workplace.

- (a) Fieldwork placements should provide the environment for a student to develop relevant work place skills.
- (b) Fieldwork placements should require a student to integrate theory and practice in areas that include:

- (i) direct work with clients
- (ii) community engagement strategies
- (iii) advocacy
- (iv) reflecting and improving on professional practice etc.

7. Credits/RPL placements

- (a) The fieldwork placement may be undertaken in a student's current workplace; however it must comply with *Fieldwork placement requirements – Certificates III and IV level courses*.
- (b) Recognition of prior learning (RPL) for earlier work experience in relation to their fieldwork placement may only be approved in exceptional circumstances. Prior written approval from ACWA is required for any RPL of fieldwork placement.

8. Fieldwork placement reports

Students will be required to complete a written report about each of their fieldwork placements.

- (a) The fieldwork placement report must:
 - i. clearly outline details of the tasks (duties and responsibilities) the student undertook whilst completing their fieldwork placement
 - ii. provide a reflective and analytical overview of the fieldwork placement
 - iii. provide evidence that the student has been able to correlate their classroom learning with their fieldwork placement experiences
 - iv. be written in the student's own words
 - v. not include any references from teachers, other students or from publicly available documents such as agency websites, brochures etc. unless the student cites and acknowledges the reference source.
- (b) Changes to the report
 - i. Supervisors must not insist on changes to the report, however, where the report reveals a deficiency in the fieldwork placement, the agency supervisor and/or fieldwork placement supervisor may make appropriate comments and indicate what action has been taken to remedy the deficiency and/or reporting inaccuracy
- (c) Verifying the report
 - i. The fieldwork placement supervisor and the student must each sign and date the report showing they have read it, and that it broadly captures the experience of the student from the fieldwork placement. Where possible, the agency supervisor (including the task supervisor if applicable) should also sign and date the student's report

9. Exceptions:

- (a) Any variation to the fieldwork placement requirements must have prior written approval from ACWA.
- (b) A detailed written submission to vary the fieldwork placement requirements must be submitted to ACWA as soon as the need for a variation is discovered.

10. Definitions

Agency means an organisation at which a student completes a fieldwork placement.

Agency supervisor means an appropriately qualified employee of an agency who supervises a student engaged in a fieldwork placement with that agency.

Direct supervision means day-to-day task supervision of a student provided by an agency supervisor.

Fieldwork placement means the placement of a student at an agency for the purposes of gaining practical experience in the profession of community welfare work.

Fieldwork placement completion form means the *ACWA Fieldwork placement completion form* (as amended from time to time), available on the ACWA website or from ACWA staff.

Fieldwork placement coordinator means a suitably qualified employee of an education provider who is employed to coordinate and supervise the fieldwork placement arrangements of students enrolled in an approved course.

Fieldwork placement supervisor means a suitably qualified employee of an education provider who is employed to supervise individual fieldwork placements of students enrolled in an approved course.

Task supervisor means a suitably qualified employee of an agency who is responsible for the 'day-to-day' supervision of a student engaged in a fieldwork placement

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