

## Course and Campus Approval Requirements

### 1. Purpose of the requirements

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ACWA course approval provides a significant advance in professional accountability and quality assurance for future community service professionals. It aims to ensure that resources available to students, including teaching staff, are adequate to meet student needs (and where possible are directed towards best practice in education and training in this field), by adherence to the ACWA Code of Ethics, and ACWA educational and competency standards.

This policy document outlines the obligations and requirements to be met by Education Providers in order to gain and maintain Approved Course status.

Education Providers will also need to complete and submit an Application, pay any fees imposed by ACWA in relation to the Application, Annual Registration, Renewal or Course Upgrade and must comply with the conditions contained in the Application and ACWA Requirements.

### 2. Definitions

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- **“Agency”** means an organisation at which a person completes a Fieldwork Placement.
- **“ACWA”** means the Australian Community Workers Association Incorporated.
- **“ACWA Requirements”** includes, but is not limited to:
  - ACWA Course and Campus Approval Requirements;
  - ACWA Fieldwork Placement Requirements;
  - ACWA Code of Ethics;
  - Any other requirements Published by ACWA relating to the conduct of an Approved Course.
- **“Annual Course Registration”** shall refer to the annual process by which an Education Provider seeks to maintain its Approved Course status.
- **“ANZSCO Requirements”** means the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations, as they are from time to time.
- **“Application”** means the document “Application for Course Approval/Renewal/Upgrade”.
- **“Approved Course”** means a course which has been approved by ACWA, in connection with a specified Campus, as one which is designed to meet the training needs of the welfare and community worker profession.
- **“Approval Time Limit”** for an Approved Course shall mean the period for which ACWA determines that the Course is entitled to hold Approved Course status.
- **“Assessment”** means the process by which students who have successfully completed Approved Courses apply for assessment of their qualification from ACWA for the purpose of membership of ACWA or for seeking skilled migration.
- **“Campus”** shall mean the location of the Course.

- **“Campus Visit”** shall mean the process by which ACWA may visit a Course.
- **“Core Units”** shall mean any units taught in the Approved Course, which predominately deals with the content identified at paragraph 3.2(a).
- **“Course”** shall mean the course which is the subject of an Application and as taught at the Campus.
- **“Course Approval”** shall mean the process by which an Education Provider which does not currently hold Approved Course status applies to have Approved Course status granted in relation to the Course, including but not limited to circumstances where an Education Provider’s Approved Course status has lapsed, been suspended or revoked, or where the Course has not previously held Approved Course status.
- **“Course Leader”** shall refer to a person employed by an Education Provider in relation to the conduct of an Approved Course.
- **“Course Renewal”** shall refer to the process by which an Education Provider seeks to renew its Approved Course status upon expiry of the Approval Time Limit.
- **“Course Upgrade”** shall refer to the process of applying for an upgrade of an Approved Course from a previously approved package.
- **“Education Provider”** includes a University, TAFE College and RTO.
- **“Fieldwork Placement”** means the placement of a person at an Agency for the purposes of gaining practical experience in the profession of community welfare work.
- **“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 the Fieldwork Placements of students enrolled in an ACWA Course.
- **“Packaged/Packaging”** refers to the combination of two separate qualifications to provide a pathway to the higher qualification (also known as ‘embedding’ or ‘nesting’).
- **“Provisional Approval”** shall refer to a type of approval that is less than Approved Course status.
- **“Published”** shall mean the posting of a document or other information by ACWA on ACWA’s website.
- **“Relevant Industry Experience”** shall mean work which predominantly involves providing direct service to clients at an individual, group, family and/or community level.
- **“RTO”** shall mean the organisation that is a registered training organisation.
- **“Statement of Approval”** shall refer to the Statement of Approval provided by ACWA to an Education Provider in respect of the granting of Approved Course Status.
- **“Student”** shall mean any person who has been enrolled in or completed an Approved Course.

In this document, the singular will be taken to refer to the plural and vice versa.

### 3. Requirements

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These requirements identify the obligations with which a Course will need to comply in order to be eligible to be considered to receive Approved Course status and with which an Approved Course must comply once it has received Approved Course status and for the duration of the Approval Time Limit.

In considering an Application, ACWA may, from time to time, consider other or different requirements necessary to receive Approved Course status. ACWA retains the absolute discretion not to grant Approved Course status to an Applicant.

### **3.1 Minimum qualification**

- (a) The minimum qualification level for which Approved Course status will be granted is an AQF Diploma studied over a minimum of two (2) academic years of full time study (or part-time equivalent).
- (b) Courses which include the Certificate III packaged into the Diploma over a total of 2 academic years will not receive Approved Course status because the level of study does not conform to ACWA's Requirements.
- (c) The conferral of Approved Course status does not indicate compliance with ANZSCO Requirements.

### **3.2 Core Content of an Approved Course**

- (a) A Course must include the following core content:
  - (i) Society (including individual and family roles);
  - (ii) Community, social and political structure and function;
  - (iii) Individual human structure and function, including psychological, physical and social aspects;
  - (iv) General and specialised welfare services and welfare systems; and
  - (v) Welfare work with individuals, families, groups and communities.
- (b) A Course must include a minimum of 400 hours of supervised Fieldwork Placement which complies with ACWA Requirements (including but not limited to ACWA Fieldwork Placement Requirements as annexed at Attachment A).
- (c) Where an Education Provider offers a Certificate IV packaged into the Diploma the electives and Fieldwork Placement components must be delivered and assessed at AQF level 5 or above.
- (d) An Education Provider must agree to comply with the ACWA Requirements in seeking to conduct an Approved Course.

### **3.3 Recognition of Prior Learning**

- (a) For the purposes of qualification assessments /membership eligibility ACWA will accept a maximum of 40% RPL awarded from an Education Provider or course which is not an Approved Course.

### **3.4 Mode of delivery**

- (a) A course must be delivered in a manner that, in the opinion of ACWA, will meet the learning outcomes of the specific units being delivered.

### 3.5 College staffing requirements

- (a) A Course Leader must have a minimum of an AQF diploma in welfare work, community services, human services or social work and have at least 3 years Relevant Industry Experience.
- (b) Course Leaders who have received approval for ACWA to act in that role in an Approved Course will be exempt from the requirements of 3.5(a) in relation to their appointment in that role for that Approved Course.
- (c) The Fieldwork Placement Coordinator of a course must hold a minimum of an AQF diploma in welfare work, community services, human services or social work and have at least 3 years broad industry experience.
- (d) Field Placement Coordinators who have received approval for ACWA to act in that role in an Approved Course will be exempt from the requirements of 3.5(c) in relation to their appointment in that role for that Approved Course. Fieldwork Placement Supervisors should have education and experience relevant to the Fieldwork Placement environment, so that, for example, a community development placement can be supervised by someone with community development qualifications, and a counselling placement can be supervised by a clinical psychologist.
- (e) Teaching staff of an Approved Course must have at least an AQF diploma level qualification in an area relevant to the units that they will be teaching and at least two years full time (or part-time equivalent) of Relevant Industry Experience. Education providers must ensure teaching staff teaching Core Units undertake at least 20 hours of Continuing Professional Development per annum.
- (f) Education Providers must ensure that teaching staff teaching Core Units are involved in 20 hours of Relevant Industry Experience per annum.
- (g) Where teaching staff are not involved in Relevant Industry Experience as part of another position away from their employment, the Education Providers will take all steps necessary (such as finding/or granting time off with pay) to ensure teaching staff complete the 20 hours of Relevant Industry Experience per year.
- (h) Education Providers must submit to ACWA for course approval purposes, a current staff matrix that identifies the teaching staff which, units they will be teaching, their qualifications and Relevant Industry Experience, relevant to those units.
- (i) Education Providers must provide to ACWA an up-to-date staff matrix as required by 3.5(h) when any of the following events or anniversaries occurs:
  - (i) Upon submitting an Application;
  - (ii) Upon any significant change to staffing (for example, a change in the Course Leader position, Fieldwork Placement Coordinator position or when more than 10% of teaching staff identified in the staff matrix change);
  - (iii) Upon any significant change to unit allocations;
  - (iv) Upon each anniversary of the approval commencement date identified in the Statement of Approval until the Approval Time Limit has elapsed.

### 3.6 Student requirements

- (a) Student selection criteria must demonstrate evidence of some prior experience, affinity or involvement with community services work and evidence of personal suitability including empathy and compassion.
- (b) Student numbers must not exceed available Fieldwork Placement opportunities. Education Providers are responsible for ensuring that every Student can undertake appropriate Fieldwork Placements which will comply with ACWA Requirements.
- (c) A maximum of 20 students per class is allowed for the necessary tutorial, group discussion and workshop classes however class sizes for counselling subjects are to be limited to 15.
- (d) Education Providers must ensure adequate academic reference material and databases available to all the student numbers. Where online resources are provided students should have access via passwords and other means. All subject areas must be adequately covered:
  - (A) General social work/welfare/human services work, including field education guides,
  - (B) Counselling and case management,
  - (C) Community work, including radical social action,
  - (D) Introductory psychology,
  - (E) Introductory sociology,
  - (F) The Australian welfare system and welfare state, including social policy,
  - (G) Ethics, values and professional practice,
  - (H) Networking, communication, meetings, & group work, and
  - (I) A selection of specialised areas such as aged, mental health, disabilities, etc;
  - (J) And each of:
    - (I) Agency management
    - (II) Understanding research
    - (III) Legal aspects.
- (e) Educational Providers, who intend to offer an Approved Course primarily to international students, must notify and keep notified all current students, prospective students, and migration agents of their Approved Course status. A breach of this requirement will be considered a breach of the conditions contained in the Application and may result in ACWA taking disciplinary action against the Approved Course.

### 3.7 Packaging

- (a) As of 1 April 2011, an Application in relation to a qualification with the Certificate III Packaged into the Diploma within the two (2) years of study will not be eligible to be granted Approved Course status.
- (b) Applications for a qualification with the Certificate III Packaged into the Diploma which are received by ACWA prior to 1 April 2011 may be granted Approved Course status for a short

period of time (which period will not extend beyond 31 December 2011) provided that the Application meets all other ACWA Requirements.

- (c) If an Education Provider decides to restructure a course granted Approved Course status under paragraph 3.7(a) they will be required to submit a new Application in relation to the restructured Course.

### **3.8 The Ongoing Obligations of an Approved Course to Notify ACWA**

- (a) ACWA must be informed of any significant changes in the location of an Approved Course. This includes any change to the Campus or any reduction in the physical space available for Students.
- (b) ACWA must be notified of any significant changes in the staffing of an Approved Course, including changes to the position of Course Leader, Fieldwork Placement Coordinator or where there has been more than a 10% turnover in teaching staff.

### **3.9 Audit**

- (a) An Approved Course may be the subject of an audit conducted by ACWA.
- (b) Details in relation to the audit process can be found in the Application.

### **3.10 Provisional Approval**

- (a) An Approved Course may have its status downgraded to Provisional Approval status.
- (b) Details in relation to Provisional Approval can be found in the Application.

### **3.11 Course Review and Grievance Procedure**

- (a) An Approved Course will be required to comply with the Course Review and Grievance Procedure.
- (b) Details in relation to the ACWA Course Review and Grievance Procedure can be found in the Application.

### **3.12 Campus Visit**

ACWA may determine that a Campus Visit to a Course is required prior to determining whether the Course should receive Approved Course status.

- (a) A minimum of 3 hours will be required per Campus Visit.
- (b) The following actions may be taken during a Campus Visit:
  - (i) Interview with the Course Leader, and other teaching staff;
  - (ii) Observation of a classroom situation;
  - (iii) Discussion with Students and teaching staff;

- (iv) Inspection of a sample of student work;
  - (v) Inspection of detailed curriculum documents, including, but not limited to core unit outlines or Fieldwork Placement planning documents;
  - (vi) Reviewing evidence of access to adequate library resources;
  - (vii) Holding a meeting with the divisional head or Chief Executive Officer of the Education Provider offering the Course.
- (c) After the Campus Visit, ACWA may request any further information or documents which are necessary to allow it to determine whether to grant Approved Course status.

**For further enquiries** ACWA National Office  
Phone: 03 9654 8287  
Email: [info@acwa.org.au](mailto:info@acwa.org.au)

## ATTACHMENT A

### ACWA Fieldwork Placement Requirements

#### 1. Background

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Fieldwork Placements play an important part in allowing students undertaking courses related to community welfare work to experience the frontline tasks of a community worker.

A Fieldwork Placement should allow a student to integrate theory into practice through range of community welfare work experiences including, in particular, client engagement.

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 the Fieldwork Placement Requirements from time to time.

#### 2. Definitions

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- a) “**Agency**” means an organisation at which a student completes a Fieldwork Placement.
- b) “**Agency Supervisor**” means an appropriately qualified employee of an Agency who supervises a student engaged in a Fieldwork Placement with that Agency.
- c) “**ACWA**” means the Australian Community Workers Association Inc.
- d) “**Approved Course**” means a course which has received approval from ACWA in accordance with ACWA’s guidelines and requirements as amended from time to time.
- e) “**Direct Supervision**” means day-to-day task supervision of a student provided by an Agency Supervisor.
- f) “**Education provider**” includes University, TAFE College, Registered Training Organisation (RTO).
- g) “**Fieldwork Placement**” means the placement of a person at an Agency for the purposes of gaining practical experience in the profession of community welfare work.
- h) “**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.
- i) “**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.
- j) “**Fieldwork Placement Requirements**” means the requirements contained in this document, or any variation or amendment to them as may be Published from time to time.
- k) “**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.
- l) “**Published**” means the posting of a document or other information by ACWA on ACWA’s website.

- m) **“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 at that Agency.

In this document, the singular includes the plural and vice versa.

### 3. Responsibility of Education Providers

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Education Providers must:

- a) ensure that they employ a Fieldwork Placement Coordinator;
- b) ensure that they employ sufficient Fieldwork Placement Supervisors for the numbers of students (no more than ten (10) students for each Fieldwork Placement Supervisor).
- c) ensure that the Fieldwork Placement Supervisor has a minimum of a Diploma level qualification in a welfare or community work-related discipline, as well as at least three year’s broad and relevant practical experience (post-qualification) in the community services industry.
- d) ensure that all enrolled students are provided with Fieldwork Placements which comply with the Fieldwork Placement Requirements.
- e) arrange Fieldwork Placements within the designated course duration;
- f) monitor and assess the appropriateness of each Fieldwork Placement, having regard to:
  - (i) the qualifications of the Agency Supervisor/s;
  - (ii) the capacity of the Agency Supervisor/s 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/s or the student in relation to the Fieldwork Placement;
  - (v) The relevance of the range of placement tasks to professional community welfare work practice.
- g) ensure the Agency has sufficient information about these Fieldwork Placement Requirements prior to the commencement of placements.

### 4. Fieldwork Placement Specifics

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Fieldwork Placements must:

- a) Be for a minimum of 400 hours duration in two separate placements;
- b) Not be less than 140 hours in duration in any one Fieldwork Placement;
- c) Not occur in the first semester of the Approved Course. This is to ensure that students are exposed to some of the underpinning practical and theoretical concepts prior to their first Fieldwork Placement;
- d) Be considerate of the religious, social or political requirements of a student and/or the Agency;
- e) Occur at least one term apart. This is to ensure that appropriate classroom instruction occurs to facilitate adequate integration of learning and practical experience;

- f) Occur during normal agency hours when Agency staff are present;
- g) Not require a student to work more than eight placement hours per day;
- h) Occur for a minimum of two full days per week;
- i) Vary significantly, in context and role, between the first Fieldwork Placement and second Fieldwork Placement (that is, students should not undertake similar tasks or be engaged with similar clients);
- j) Each occur in a different field of practice with a different Agency Supervisor;
- k) Have a formal written agreement prepared 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.

## 5. Fieldwork Placement Supervision

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To ensure that a student obtains 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 be a suitably qualified employee of the Agency and engaged in active practice;
- b) The supervision of the student in the Agency is to be oriented to the student's educational goals;
- c) 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;
- d) The Agency Supervisor must have educational qualifications of at least Diploma level in social welfare or community work with a minimum of at least three years practical experience in a community services setting including at least 2 years post-qualification experience;
- e) A Task Supervisor must have a minimum of Certificate IV level qualification in the community services and have at least three (3) years practical experience in a community services setting.
- f) An Agency Supervisor can only 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; and
  - (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; and
  - (iv) No more than three students are on placement at the Agency at the same time.
- g) An Agency Supervisor may only supervise more than three students where:
  - (v) the Agency Supervisor's role as defined by their position description is that of a Student Supervisor; and
  - (vi) where each student is assigned a suitably qualified Task Supervisor.

## 6. Liaison Visits

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Liaison visits provide 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 3 liaison visits per student for each Fieldwork Placement. Where extenuating circumstances exist, one of the liaison visits may be replaced by alternate conferencing arrangements
- b) Each liaison visit must involve the student, the Agency Supervisor, the Task Supervisor (where applicable) and the Fieldwork Placement Supervisor;
- c) The purpose of liaison visits is to discuss, facilitate and evaluate educational progress of the student and to resolve any problems which may have arisen;
- d) Notes in relation to liaison visits are to be made and distributed to the Agency Supervisor, the student and retained on the student's file held by the Education Provider;
- e) If the student's progress is unsatisfactory, discussions must be held with the student prior to any disciplinary action occurring.

## 7. What Students Should Gain From a Fieldwork Placement

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Fieldwork Placements should be used by students as an opportunity to experience different types of community welfare-related work, while also using classroom based learning in the "real world".

- a) Fieldwork Placements should provide a student with the opportunity to demonstrate their increasing ability to operate as a "work-ready" community worker;
- b) Fieldwork Placements should require a student to integrate theory and practice in the areas of:
  - (i) Case management;
  - (ii) Community development strategy;
  - (iii) Working with groups;
  - (iv) Policy development; and
  - (v) Reflecting and improving on professional practice.
- c) Examples of appropriate roles that a student may fulfil while engaged in a Fieldwork Placement include:
  - (vi) Individual and Group Assessment;
  - (vii) Early Intervention;
  - (viii) Casework;
  - (ix) Case Management;
  - (x) Client Services;
  - (xi) Program Planning and Development;
  - (xii) Family Welfare and Support Work;

- (xiii) Advocacy and Support Work;
  - (xiv) Community Development Work;
  - (xv) Community Work; or
  - (xvi) Social Welfare Work.
- d) To ensure that students obtain a hands-on experience of community welfare work, no more than 5% of the hours in each Fieldwork Placement may be occupied with non-community welfare related activities, such as:
- (xvii) Administrative duties except where they directly relate to the student's position and responsibilities;
  - (xviii) Food delivery;
  - (xix) Food preparation;
  - (xx) Personal care activities;
  - (xxi) Domestic duties (including cleaning the Agency premises);
  - (xxii) Respite;
  - (xxiii) Childcare;
  - (xxiv) Entertaining clients;
  - (xxv) Recreational or leisure activities (without a focus on the psycho-social aspects of client engagement).

## **8. Credits/RPL placements**

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- a) Students may seek recognition of prior learning (RPL) for earlier work experience in relation to one Fieldwork Placement.
- b) Where no RPL or Credit is obtained for either Fieldwork Placement, one placement, may be undertaken in a student's current workplace, however it must comply with Fieldwork Placement Requirements.

## **9. Fieldwork Placement Reports**

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- a) Students will be required to complete a written report about each of their Fieldwork Placements. 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; and

- iv. Be written in the student's own words and must 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.

NOTE: ACWA will randomly check Fieldwork Placement reports to identify areas of concern including compliance issues.

- b) Supervisors must not insist on changes to the report; however:
  - i. 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;
  - ii. The Agency Supervisor (including the Task Supervisor where applicable) and 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.

ACWA has developed a Fieldwork Placement Completion Form which may be used by Education Providers as a Fieldwork Placement report template. The Fieldwork Placement Completion Form may also be used as a guide for Fieldwork Placement report format.

**NOTE:** ACWA may request that an applicant completes a Fieldwork Placement Completion Form where the submitted report does not provide satisfactory details or evidence for a membership or pre-migration qualification assessment.

## 10. Exceptions:

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- 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.

### Enquiries

Further enquiries can be addressed to:

Assessment Coordinator  
ACWA National Office  
T (03) 9654 8287  
E [assessments@acwa.org.au](mailto:assessments@acwa.org.au)