

## ACWA Fieldwork Placement Requirements

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.

### 1. 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 student enrolled in an Approved Course at an Agency for the purpose 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.

## 2. 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.

## 3. 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.

#### **4. 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:
  - (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 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.

## 6. 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:
- (i) Individual and Group Assessment;
  - (ii) Early Intervention;
  - (iii) Casework;
  - (iv) Case Management;
  - (v) Client Services;
  - (vi) Program Planning and Development;
  - (vii) Family Welfare and Support Work;
  - (viii) Advocacy and Support Work;
  - (ix) Community Development Work;
  - (x) Community Work; or
  - (xi) 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:
- (i) Administrative duties except where they directly relate to the student's position and responsibilities;
  - (ii) Food delivery;
  - (iii) Food preparation;
  - (iv) Personal care activities;
  - (v) Domestic duties (including cleaning the Agency premises);
  - (vi) Respite;
  - (vii) Childcare;
  - (viii) Entertaining clients;
  - (ix) Recreational or leisure activities (without a focus on the psycho-social aspects of client engagement).

## **7. 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.

## 8. 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.

## 9. 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.

Your partner in professional practice



### 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)

**Contact  
US**

PO Box 42, Flinders Lane  
MELBOURNE VIC 8009

Phone: 03 9654 8287  
Fax: 03 9654 1081  
Email: [info@aiwcw.org.au](mailto:info@aiwcw.org.au)  
Website: [www.aiwcw.org.au](http://www.aiwcw.org.au)