



ACWA COVID-19 flexible course arrangements (July 2021)

ACWA's response to COVID-19 pandemic

ACWA has been closely monitoring the profound effect on the COVID-19 pandemic on our stakeholders including practitioners, course providers and students.

We have been consulting with our stakeholders on the ACWA course accreditation guidelines and the flexible arrangements have been guided by the feedback we received.

Direct practice placements are an important part of course delivery and allow students to develop skills in strength-based practice, case management, basic counselling and supported decision making. However, these flexibility arrangements provide further flexibility on how these skills can be taught and assessed.

We know you will agree that Australia's future community services workforce is dependent on current quality course delivery and it is important that all student learning outcomes are achieved.

Flexible course arrangements

Summary of changes to January 2021 version

The arrangements remain unchanged from the previous version. We have decided to extend the arrangements until 31 December 2021.

These guidelines should be read and implemented in conjunction with the original ACWA Course accreditation guidelines. All other requirements remain the same.

1. Duration of flexible arrangements

These flexible course arrangements will be in place until 31 December 2021. The arrangements will cease on 31 December 2021 unless advised otherwise. We will, however, continue to monitor the situation and reserve the right to make changes should it become necessary. Providers will be notified well in advance.

2. Mode of delivery

We will continue to approve alternative online delivery arrangements. This remains in effect until 31 December 2021.

3. Fieldwork placements

As fieldwork placements are a vital part of accreditation and course outcomes, there is no reduction permitted in the minimum 400 hours of placement. However, we understand that the number of staff physically present on agency premises needs to be kept to a minimum to limit a second COVID-19 wave. As such, we are introducing further flexibility to reduce the minimum hours of direct practice and further provisions around alternative placement arrangements.

The following variations, therefore, will stand until 31 December 2021 (Including placements commenced on or before this date):

- Remote placements with client contact are allowed where there is clearly established agency supervision and tasks and responsibilities identified by both the placement agency and the education provider.
- No more than 200 (**increased from previous 140 hours**) hours of placement can be substituted with supplementary projects. **These supplementary projects should include an agency partner.** For the purposes of this flexible arrangement, the requirement 'not be less than 140 hours in duration in any one fieldwork placement' has been suspended.
- If students are unable to attend their placement due to agency closure, hours that have already been completed can be credited towards the total placement hours.
- Students who have not commenced placements can postpone these for up to a **further** three months.

*We understand this may cause delay in students graduating from the course. We also understand that relevant regulatory authorities are aware of this and have already approved such arrangements. International students who are unable to complete their course and placements within their student visa period will be affected, however, they can contact the Department of Home Affairs and apply for a visa extension.

- Higher education courses offering more than 400 hours of placement may consider reducing hours to the minimum of 400 hours.
- Education providers can choose the option of one single placement of 400 hours at the end of the course. This will allow many students to move their placements towards the end of their program.
- Suspension of the requirement 'placements must occur at least one term apart'.
- Flexible supervision arrangements (Zoom, Skype, phone etc.) can be arranged.
- Working students can undertake the full 400 hours placement at their workplace. Please note skill level requirement must be met and strictly no aged/disability care placements (where focus of placement is providing care, recreation, activities assisting or basic support for example disability support work) are permitted.

All other accreditation requirements must be followed.

4. **Fieldwork placement completion letter**

ACWA accredited course providers must issue a placement completion letter/certificate on completion of the required 400 hours. This letter should include following details.

Full name of student

Agency name

Agency address

Agency contact number

Type of setting (for example, child protection/mental health/youth work/homelessness/AOD)

Placement start date

Placement completion date

(Repeat this information for second placement)

Signature and name of Course Coordinator/Fieldwork Placement Coordinator

Information in the placement completion letter will be used for the purposes of ACWA membership eligibility assessment and migration skills assessment. Students applying for undergraduate and postgraduate programs can use this letter for recognition of prior learning.

Where there is reduced direct practice component in placements ACWA may ask applicants to complete 3 months equivalent full-time post qualification direct practice experience for the purposes of obtaining ACWA full membership or a positive migration skills assessment under the ACWA accredited qualification stream.

Further information and support

If you are unable to meet the flexible delivery guidelines you must notify ACWA within 14 days.

If you have any questions, please contact Jesu Jacob via jesu@acwa.org.au.

Students should first contact their education provider for advice on course related matters.