

# **PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENT HANDBOOK**

**Counselling – COU8050**

**2022**



UNIVERSITY  
OF SOUTHERN  
QUEENSLAND



## STUDENT DECLARATION:

The professional placement handbook has been produced to aid students in their understanding of counselling placements expectations and requirements. Every student must complete and submit the following declaration to confirm they have read and understood the entire contents of this handbook. Without completion of this declaration students will risk not being permitted to attend placement.

- I declare I have read and understood the Professional Placement Handbook for Counselling Students.
- I understand that I must abide by the standards described within the Professional Placement Handbook for Counselling Students. I understand that I need to contact the Professional Placements Office if I am unable to meet the obligations for workplace experience at any stage of my course progression.
- I understand and accept my student responsibilities as outlined in Professional Placement Handbook for Counselling Students.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Witness Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This form is part of the pre placements mandatory requirements for all students that attend placements from the University of Southern Queensland. **It must be submitted to InPlace before commencement of each placement.**

## Definitions of Key Terms:

**Professional placement:** Professional Placement means the placement of a student at an agency for the purposes of gaining practical experience in the profession of counselling work.

**Agency:** Agency is the organisation at which a student completes a professional placement.

**Course examiner:** The USQ academic staff member who oversees the course and liaise with agencies as appropriate.

**Line supervisor:** Agency Supervisor is an appropriately qualified employee of an agency who supervises a student engaged in a professional placement with that agency.

**Clinical supervisor:** The clinical supervisor should be a registered clinical counsellor, social worker, or psychologist of their professional association.

**Counselling Supervision Contract (Or Clinical Supervision Contract):** A written agreement required by counselling associations, describing the aims and responsibilities of both the supervisor and supervisee.

**Professional placement coordinator (Course Examiner):** Professional placement coordinator means a suitably qualified employee of an education provider who is employed to coordinate and supervise the professional placement arrangements of students enrolled in an approved course.

**Professional placement supervisor:** Professional placement supervisor means a suitably qualified employee of an education provider who may be employed to supervise individual professional placements of students enrolled in an approved course.

**Placement Officer** means the qualified administrative employee of the University to coordinate student placement.

**Learning Agreement and Plan:** The Learning Agreement is the document that records the placement plans and arrangement and learning objectives and tasks.

**Counselling log:** A record of the hours of counselling, supervision, and professional development that is signed by clinical supervisor and submitted as evidence of completing required hours. It also includes a journal of learning activities and reflections made by the student throughout the placement.

## The Professional Experience Placements Team

The Professional Experience Placements Team (PEPT) consists of Placement Officers and Professional Experience staff in Toowoomba and Ipswich. This team allocates the clinical placements and can help you with any questions about preparing for and attending a clinical placement.

The PEPT member managing Master of Counselling (MCCO) placements is based in Toowoomba. You can contact staff face-to-face, or via phone or email.

### Toowoomba

**Location:** Level 1 W Block

**Phone:** 07 4631 2974

**Email:** [HES.support@usq.edu.au](mailto:HES.support@usq.edu.au)

## The Academic Team

The Academic Team member associated with professional experience is the Course Examiner for your Professional Placement courses. They are located in the Ipswich Office but can be contacted either by making an appointment to see them face to face, email, or phone them.

Dr Elisa Agostineli

**Location:** Level 3, Building B, Ipswich Campus

**Phone:** 07 3812 6391

**Email:** [Elisa.Agostinelli@usq.edu.au](mailto:Elisa.Agostinelli@usq.edu.au)

If you require support at any of stage of your study, you can access Student support services for [Health, counselling and wellbeing](#) via UConnect for *confidential* support including emergency contact details.

For an appointment phone 07 4631 2372 on Monday to Friday or email [Student.Services@usq.edu.au](mailto:Student.Services@usq.edu.au)

## Checklist for Placement

Your Counselling Discipline Study Desk can be found with your other study desks and contains all the information you require to prepare for a placement.

## Practicum Information and Mandatory Requirements

Required forms and documents for the placement courses can be found under the Practicum Information Section on the Grad Dip and Master of Counselling Study Desk. Students are expected to access this information and ensure that they plan their enrolment in placement subjects and submission of mandatory requirements to ensure they are able to be placed in their nominated semester.

### **Late enrolment or not submitting mandatory documents in time may make it impossible to source a placement for students in the nominated semester**

1. **Important Dates document** provides dates for each semester when you should be enrolled and submit your documents. This is normally the semester before you want to do placement as this allows the Placement Officer time to source an appropriate placement for you.
2. **InPlace** - USQ use a cloud-based program called InPlace to manage placements. Please click on the link to access the website information and instructions for uploading documents, available on the Counselling Placement Hub. Your normal USQ login and password will access your InPlace file.

All mandatory documents must be uploaded to InPlace and your placement information will be recorded on this site for future reference.

3. **Mandatory Documents** must be uploaded to InPlace **before** the Placement Officer will source a placement for you. You must upload them by the due dates on the Important Dates document and must keep them current for each placement. As part of your mandatory documents, you will submit a **Placement Request Form**. This gives you the opportunity to provide 3 locations or contact details of the agency where you would like to do placement. The Placement Officer will then attempt to source you a placement within an agency within one of these locations; however this may not always be possible. Please make sure you are able to attend placement within all the locations nominated.

The Practicum Information Section also contains other information relating to placement, such as how to apply for a placement extension, insurance while on placement and eligibility to apply for a placement at your current workplace. Make sure you review the site so you are well informed.



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## Section 1: Introduction to Counselling Placement

The University of Southern Queensland has included professional placements for the program Master of Counselling (MCCO) in accordance with the standards set down by the Psychotherapy and Counselling Association of Australia (PACFA) and the Australian Counselling Association (ACA). Students complete counselling placements in various organisations, including non-government organisations such as Headspace, UnitingCare, CentaCare, Anglicare, and similar NGOs. They have also done placements in schools, rehabilitation centres, aged care facilities, churches, and domestic violence services, where professional counselling has been offered by the service. USQ's Ipswich Psychology and Counselling Clinic is also a choice for some students. Some have completed placements with private practitioners. Regardless of the nature of the placement site, all placements need to include the following elements (see PACFA training guidelines, 2018):

- “A minimum of 40 hours of face-to-face counselling or psychotherapy practice (client contact) with 10 hours of supervision (related to client contact) within training must be completed and assessed as successful by the training provider. Successful completion of supervised practice is required to be evidenced by a log signed by the responsible supervisor(s). [Please note that only formal and contracted counselling relationship with therapeutic intent can be accepted as counselling experience. Casual conversations or interviewing in a non-counselling context cannot be logged as counselling]
- Details of the client work must be included in a professional log which the student maintains and presents at assessment as evidence of competence to practice. (Client confidentiality must be maintained in the log).
- Additional non-therapeutic client contact may be required to gain the minimum 40 hours of face-to-face client contact.
- If more than the minimum of 40 hours of supervised client contact is completed during course, any additional client contact hours over and above the minimum requirements may be completed via synchronous video conferencing or telephone hours.
- Client contact generally includes other activities in addition to the 40 hours of face-to-face supervised client contact (e.g., writing case notes, attending staff meetings, counselling observations, and administration)”. (p.2)



- All students must also receive 10 hours of clinical supervision relating to their face-to-face counselling
- All students must also complete 5 hours of professional development during their placement

The counselling placement is not available for the students in the Master of Counselling (Advanced Practice) but is available for those who are enrolled in the qualifying streams (i.e., the remaining specialisations).

Completing a counselling placement involves more than just completing the hours of counselling and supervision. The practicum is quite demanding in ways that differ significantly from the demands of typical courses. Availability, energy, emotional intelligence and social resilience, and geographical distance to the placement site are among the most demanding aspects of practicum. The organisation and its clients rely on counselling interns to be capable of meeting these professional demands. If you believe these could be too much for you, you are ethically obliged to discuss them with the course examiner.

Although the course requires 40 hours of client contact, 10 hours of clinical supervision, and 5 hours of professional development, we recommend to students to plan time available for the full 330 hours required for the course, including time for assessments, case notes, case preparation, administration, agency meetings, extra research, and other tasks required for the role. Please also note that the placement will usually take an entire semester. Counselling placements cannot be done in a full-time block over a short period of time as clients typically require ongoing services over several weeks. Likewise, the emotional energy required for counselling means that we recommend a maximum of two days per week for counselling activities.

The Professional Placement Handbook is designed to provide information to students to guide them in their placement.

This handbook is to be read in conjunction with the relevant course specification for the COU8050.

## 1.1 Prior to the Placement

*Prior to enrolling in placement courses, students need to be aware of the following:*

### 1.3.1 Read the course specifications:

Within the Master of Counselling Program students need to complete the placement course to be eligible for a passing grade and PACFA registration. Students are responsible to check their eligibility to undertake placement by ensuring they have successfully completed the pre-requisites for their enrolled placement (see course specification).

### 1.3.2 Reasonable adjustments:

Please note that all adjustments and disclosures are made as per the USQ Students with a Disability Policy and Procedure. You can review the document here [policy](#).

To notify the PEPT of your need for an adjustment, please complete the Placement Request Form and submit this for review. In addition, please contact the Course Examiner to discuss adjustments that may specifically relate to counselling agencies and activities to be undertaken.

### 1.3.3 Compliance requirements:

Before going on placement, students must complete the pre-requisite courses, and meet the following requirements:

- ✓ Prior to undertaking a placement MCCO students must supply all mandatory requirements via InPlace
- ✓ Students must attend a Professional Placement Induction Session (PEPT will advise if this is applicable).

It is highly recommended that students have a **current Australian Driver's Licence**

## Section 2: Placement Allocation Process for Students

### Professional Placement Allocation Flowchart:

To ensure that students gain maximum benefit from their professional experience, USQ has developed processes that ensure consistent governance of professional activities and quality learning outcomes applicable to professional. The professional placement steps listed below identifies tasks to be completed and should be undertaken when planning and requesting a placement.

#### **Organising placements is a complex process**

It begins three months before the commencement of the placement semester. Pre-placement planning has a number of stages involving communication with students and agencies offering placements.

To help this process and increase the possibility of placement options, you need to enroll early and submit your mandatory documents at least one month prior to the placement commencement semester.

***Follow the steps below***

## 2.1 Enrol in the course upon meeting the pre-requisite

Students considering undertaking placement in the next semester should enrol in the placement course as soon as possible and visit the Practicum Information Section on Study Desk for more information.

The main communication point for student inquiries regarding enrolment is via email to [usq.support@usq.edu.au](mailto:usq.support@usq.edu.au).

## 2.2 Complete Placement Preferences

Soon after the commencement of each academic year, students who are enrolled in the professional placement courses should complete and upload Placement Request Form on InPlace. This form is located in the Practicum Information Section on the program Study Desk. Students are required to complete the Placement Request Form which is designed to collect information about preferred Locations. Every attempt will be made to secure a placement, but students should be aware that placements and placement preference options cannot be guaranteed. Students must be willing to accept any relevant placement option for the professional placement.

## 2.3 Submit mandatory documents via InPlace

Go to the Practicum Information Section on StudyDesk for information, forms and links to obtain your mandatory documents:

- Apply for a Working with Children check. In Qld apply for a Blue Card through USQ or in other States or Territories apply for a relevant Children's Check. Upload cards to InPlace once received (3-year expiry)
- Apply for a Police Check and upload certificate to InPlace (3-year expiry)
- Update your resume for each placement and upload to InPlace.
- Read the Counselling Professional Placement Handbook and upload the signed Student Declaration Form to InPlace for each placement. You can find this form at the beginning of this handbook.
- The Placement Request Form must be completed for each placement before placement can be requested.

## 2.4 Placement Negotiation

After receiving all the mandatory documents, the Placement Officer will start to negotiate a suitable placement. This can take up to a month to negotiate and sometimes longer. Once a placement is negotiated, students will be informed of what they have to do through the USQ email account.

## 2.5 Interview with the agency

The Agency will wish to interview you prior to agreeing to take you for placement. Either the PEPT will provide you with an appointment date and time, or the agency will contact you directly to discuss a suitable time. Students are expected to research the agency and its role in the community and consider how you can contribute to the agency during your placement, in order to be prepared for the interview. Students must also present themselves in a professional manner for the interview.

Students must inform the Placement Officer about the outcome of the interview through [usq.support@usq.edu.au](mailto:usq.support@usq.edu.au).

## 2.6 Signing the Student Placement Agreement

USQ must have an agreement in place with any agencies where students do placement. The PEPT ensure that this is all completed prior to students commencing placement. Students will be informed about their starting date for placement through the USQ email account once the PEPT have confirmed everything is completed.

### InPlace Tips

- Use the InPlace instructions on the Grad Dip and Masters of Counselling Study Desk to upload your documents.. InPlace will then send the Placements Team a message to go in and 'verify' or check that your documents are correct
- Go back and check a couple of days later that they have been approved
- When it is busy it might take the Placements Team longer than 2 days to check your documents
- Checking the details page of your InPlace file is a quick way of finding out when your documents will expire - make sure they are kept current for all your placements
- InPlace works best with **Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox**
- **InPlace is a cloud-based website:** <https://inplace.usq.edu.au>
- **Password and Username:** the same as other USQ logins

## 2.7 Complete a Work and Activities Plan with the agency and sign a supervision contract

Once the student placement agreement is signed, you must complete a work and activities plan with the agency and sign a supervision contract (these forms are available on the COU8050 Study Desk). You need to submit these documents to the course examiner, and receive feedback from the course examiner, before you can undertake any counselling at your placement.

## Section 3: Important Information for Placement

### 3.1 Communication during the placement allocation process

All email communication will be via the USQ email account. It is a student's responsibility to check their emails, study desk and InPlace in order to be up to date on the placement allocation process and meet their responsibilities in a timely manner. Students may send their queries through [usq.support@usq.edu.au](mailto:usq.support@usq.edu.au).

### 3.2 Placement Request

Because of the number of students going on field placement every semester as well as the number of students each agency is able to take for placement, it is impossible to satisfy every student's placement preferences. Students can nominate three locations where they would like to be placed. Make sure you have the ability to travel to all locations nominated or have accommodation if you plan to stay. There is no accommodation associated with any placement sites and students are responsible for their own costs for travel.

Students may discuss their preferences with the PEPT for more information.

Once you have submitted your location preferences, the PEPT will source you a placement where possible with one of the agencies with whom we have an agreement, within one of these locations. If this is not possible, we will contact you to discuss other options.

Please make sure you have read Section 1 of this handbook regarding restrictions on placement when submitting your preferences.

If students have a particular concern regarding placement allocation, they should direct their query to the PEPT. Please note that there is no direct correlation between a placement and employment in placement organisations.

### 3.3 Limitation in organising own placements

Student placements are organised by the PEPT. If students are aware of a placement opportunity within an agency, they are able to suggest the same to the PEPT and appropriate procedures will be followed. Students are also encouraged to approach the university placement staff before initiating discussions with an agency regarding placements. **Under no circumstances is a student able to or allowed to finalise their own placement.**

### 3.4 Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of prior learning is a process that assesses the individual's formal and informal learning and work experience in the field to determine the extent to which that individual has achieved the required learning outcomes, competency outcomes or standards to warrant exemption from a particular course. Students apply for online via the Credit/Exemption Application form.

Receiving recognition of prior learning for this course will influence your eligibility to apply for PACFA registration. Please discuss this with the relevant examiner, as well as with PACFA.

### 3.5 Placements at the student's current place of employment

It is possible to undertake the placement at your current place of employment, providing certain conditions are met. Placements undertaken at your current place of employment need to be consistent with the USQ Policy Conflict of Interest. Students who intend to undertake the placements at their place of employment must first discuss this option with the Placement Officer, then complete and submit the Application to Undertake Placement at the Current Workplace. Students may be allowed to undertake their placement in their workplace in an area that will offer responsibilities different to their current roles and responsibilities. Students will be required to provide documentation to support their request. Once the PEPT has assessed that the workplace may be able to offer appropriate learning opportunities, they will make contact with the agency to ensure that the agency will:

- recognise that the employee is in a student role
- be able to meet the educational requirements, principles and policies of the profession and the university
- agree to sign the 'Student Placement Contract' for unpaid work placement
- allow for student learning experiences that are separate to the student's routine work responsibilities
- provide the student protected time separate from the duties carried out at work, including attendance at integration seminars
- wherever possible provide a Supervisor who is not the student's line manager or usual supervisor
- ensure the student receives supervision regularly and sufficient support to complete the Learning Plan and assessments.

### 3.6 Placement Variations

Students who consider that they are experiencing 'exceptional circumstances' that requires variation to the usual placement timetable or location may apply for a variation to placement. This includes situations where a placement extends into the next semester owing to a later start date. The onus is on the student to demonstrate their extenuating circumstances and to provide appropriate evidence and/or supporting documentation. The students must complete an Extension Application before the placement semester ends and send it to [usq.support@usq.edu.au](mailto:usq.support@usq.edu.au) for the course examiner and/or Program Coordinator's approval.

### 3.7 Sick Leave from Placement

If a student falls sick on placement they must:

- Comply with agency procedures on providing medical certificates
- Notify their agency supervisor immediately of absence
- Contact the PEPT and advise of the absence
- Provide a medical certificate to the PEPT if absent for more than 3 placement days
- Submit Extension Application if the placement is not completed by the designated assessment deadlines.

### 3.8 Placement fares & expenses

Students are responsible for their own travel costs in getting to and from their field placement. Most agencies will have a policy allowing students to use the agency vehicles for client and agency work related learning tasks. Where this is not possible, a student may be required to use their own vehicle. Students should also have the appropriate license and points to drive a vehicle.

### 3.9 Withdrawal by student

Once a student has commenced a placement, if they have exceptional circumstances and wish to withdraw the student must obtain formal approval from the PEPT staff before taking any action. The placement staff will consult with the agency Supervisor and Course Examiner before granting approval for the student to withdraw.

*Without prior approval from the placement staff, withdrawal by the student will result in a Fail grade for the course.*

### 3.10 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is core to the counselling profession. Students should exercise great caution before releasing any information obtained directly or indirectly about the people, projects or agency business connected with their placement, whether it relates to specific cases or to policy matters. In particular, any information related to users of the agency's services must be presumed confidential unless stated otherwise. Students should never discuss clients using identifying information at home, online or in the classroom. If in doubt about the confidentiality of material students should seek advice from their Agency Supervisor.

### 3.11 Work Health & Safety

The placement agency's policy on WHS should be fully explained as part of the student's orientation and detailed in the student's Learning Agreement. Students should ensure that they fully understand the policy and approach the Agency Supervisor over any incident or issue about which they are concerned or unclear, and report any incident following the agency's WHS policy.

### 3.12 Use of social media during placement

Students are strongly advised to exercise judgement and caution in the use of social media about their placement, as well as whilst on placement. This includes but is not limited to using mobile phones for personal calls whilst on placement, ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of the agency in the use of social media sites such as Facebook, not taking photographs for personal use during placement and ensure professional use of the internet during placement.

### 3.13 Insurance: third parties

USQ students and employers engaged in USQ approved placements are covered by the University's legal liability insurance. This provides insurance for USQ students engaged in professional experience (including field placements) and the relevant employers against claims of loss or injury by third parties resulting from professional experience activity.

### 3.14 Motor vehicles

Students should be familiar with and adhere to the placement agency's motor vehicle policy. Students should be identified as a designated driver before driving an agency's vehicle. Students should also have the appropriate license and points to drive a vehicle. Where a student has a suspended license, they should not drive a motor vehicle for the agency.



## Section 4: Professional Placement Roles & Responsibilities

When a student undertakes a professional placement, the various parties assume particular responsibilities for the placement. The parties are the Student, Agency, and University. The Agency Supervisor and the University PEPT are the key contacts throughout the professional placement.

The outcomes of placement reflect the above collaborative arrangements. However, it remains the responsibility of the University, in all instances, to determine the final grade/outcome for the placement.

### 4.1 Students

A professional placement is an important part of the Master of Counselling course. Students are expected to complete the following checklist in order to be prepared to successfully complete their placements:

1. Provide all mandatory documents via InPlace by the appropriate date.
2. Once the PEPT advise you of a planned interview with an agency prepare for the interview by familiarising yourself with their website and their programs and purpose so you can demonstrate an understanding and interest in the work they do.
3. Attend the interview dressed professionally and at the time and date agreed.
4. Demonstrate a professional attitude, be respectful and appreciative of the opportunity you are being offered and be open to the learning opportunities available at the facility
5. After your interview, please advise the PEPT of any outcomes.
6. Once an agency has confirmed your placement the PEPT will confirm your start date by email via your umail account.
7. Attend your placement on the date confirmed and take your Learning Agreement with you to be completed by you and your Supervisor by day 10 of your placement.
8. Ensure you complete all assessments by the due date and enlist your Supervisors assistance where required.
9. Ensure your timesheet is completed and signed by your supervisor at the end of each day
10. Take any opportunities for learning and professional development that are available during your placement.
11. Make yourself available for supervision meetings with your agency supervisor and complete any activities or tasks as requested and in the timeframe required.
12. Make yourself available for evaluation meetings and/or teleconferences with the course coordinator and USQ staff as required. Prepare for these meetings with any materials requested.

☆ Demonstrate a **professional attitude** in all areas of your placement and be open to opportunities to learn and take on board feedback from your supervisor.

☆ Work within the PACFA Code of Ethics

## 4.2 Agency

An Agency is an organisation that provides structured and supervised practical experience for students for the purposes of enhancing their work readiness.

The agency must sign a Student Placement Agreement prior to any students attending placement and they nominate an appropriate individual/s to supervise, support and mentor the student while in the workplace. They must advise the Placement Officer who this person will be. Some agencies may nominate a site supervisor (to help you with administrative functions) and a clinical supervisor. For most agencies, this will be the same person.

### 4.2.1 Site Supervisor

Site Supervisors are individuals with Site supervisors are individuals who are familiar with the running of the agency and will help you with all aspects of your placement. The Site Supervisor plays a key role in shaping students the placement experience

#### ***Pre-placement arrangements:***

- Ensuring that a 'Student Placement Contract' is in place and current with their agency prior to a student commencing placement.
- Ensuring that management and staff within the office agree to the student placement.

#### ***Orientation and induction:***

- Providing an orientation session including agency policies on confidentiality, privacy, and WHS.
- Ensuring student safety and adherence to WHS legislation and agency procedures and guidelines, both with respect to the place of work and the type of work they are asked to undertake.

### 4.2.2. Counselling Supervisor

A counselling supervisor is a suitably qualified employee of an agency who is responsible for the supervising the face-to-face counselling experiences of the student. Normally the counselling supervisor should be a member of a counselling, social work, psychological or equivalent association.

The agency needs to provide counselling supervision (or where this cannot be provided, allow for the student to organise an external counselling supervisor) that fits the PACFA/ACA requirements. All supervisors must be eligible to be members of a relevant professional association (see above) and have a minimum of 5 years of counselling experience.

The course examiner will confirm whether a proposed counselling supervisor meets minimum requirements.

## 4.3 University

### 4.3.1 Course Examiner

The University Professional Placement Coordinator is the qualified academic (Course Examiner) who will work in conjunction with the PEPT to supervise and monitor students' placements progress and final assessments. This role may be delegated out amongst other academics from time to time.

### 4.3.2 Placement Officer

Placement Officers are the qualified administrative employees of the university who are responsible for coordinating the professional placement arrangements for the students. An important element of professional coordination is fostering productive and reciprocal partnerships between agencies, the university, and students. Placement Officers ensure that all professional participants (student, liaison workers, supervisors, and other staff members) are adequately qualified, trained, inducted, and supervised to undertake the proposed professional.

Placement Officers have responsibility for the following areas:

- Developing and maintaining resources to ensure best practice during the professional placement.
- Ensuring that all information has been provided to the students, agencies, and supervisors, with the placement arrangements confirmed in writing.
- Managing the mandatory documents associated with professional placements on InPlace.
- Ensure equitable opportunities are available for each student.
- Ensuring availability for consultation and support to the agency supervisors and the students.
- Responding to agency supervisor or student problems in a timely manner.
- Evaluating strengths and weaknesses of placements to ensure ongoing quality improvement.
- Ensuring professional experiences are inclusive for students and cater to student diversity by making reasonable adjustments.
- Ensuring that the agency supervisor has an educational qualification in a welfare or community work-related discipline that is equivalent to or higher than the qualification level they are supervising plus a minimum of at least three years practical experience in a community services setting including at least 2 years post-qualification experience.
- Collaborating with professional agencies to formulate solutions to complex professional issues.

### 4.3.5 University Visits

The PEPT and/or course examiner and supervisors will engage with the placement agencies physically (in person) or virtually (Skype or Zoom) in the initial stages, at mid-placement (approximately 65 hours) and towards the end of placement. They will also make themselves available when a student has been identified as requiring additional support.

### **Additional meetings**

Additional meetings may be required if there are concerns about a student's conduct or progress. These can be initiated by student, agency or placement team through phone or skype.

## **4.4 Summary of Placement Timeline:**

- **Read Placement Handbook and submit mandatory documents & Student Declaration via InPlace**

- **Confirmation of Organisation**

Placement officer confirms willingness of agency to consider student

Student begin preparing contract, learning plan, and counselling supervision contract

- **Engaging host agency and complete introductory documentation**

Student arrange interview time and date with site supervisor

Negotiate and fill out contract, learning plan, and counselling supervision contract. Have site supervisor sign documentation.

Student and site supervisor to agree on start date. Recommend no less than 7 days from this interview.

Submit contract, learning plan, and counselling supervision contract via course StudyDesk. \*

- **Commence placement**

Commence placement after course examiner approval, on the specified date.

- **Initial feedback on skills**

Ensure clinical supervisor has viewed at least one session of your counselling, live or by video. Film only with agency and client consent.

- **Mid-review**

Between 15 and 20 hours of counselling and 5 hours of supervision, ask your supervisor for a mid-review interview and to fill out the mid-review report. Submit to the Examiner as soon as done via the submission instructions provided on the course studydesk. This report is assessable and provides opportunities to acknowledge skills and strengths in the placement, and also areas that may need further development.

The course examiner will contact both you and your line supervisor to discuss the report.

- **Completion of placement**

After 40 hours of client contact time, and 10 hours of supervision, and 5 hours of professional development, request a final interview/final report with your line/counselling supervisor.

Submit the Final Report and Logs to the Course Examiner via the submission instructions on the course studydesk.

The course examiner will contact both you and your line supervisor to discuss the report.

## Section 5: Resolving Difficulties during Placement

While most placements proceed without incidents, it is important that all concerns are responded to in a timely manner and principles of natural justice and procedural fairness applies. Where possible placement difficulties will be addressed by using the steps below to ensure the placement continues and the student has the opportunity to demonstrate competence and pass their placement.

It is important to note that:

- Some issues may also be dealt with through an agency's policies, grievance, and complaint processes (e.g., harassment and discrimination, breach of confidentiality or privacy)
- Students are on placement at the invitation of the agency and on a voluntary basis. An agency may decide not to follow due process and terminate a placement immediately.

### **STEP 1: Student and the Agency Supervisor discuss difficulties**

If either the student or agency supervisor identifies issues arising from the student's performance, or if the student is experiencing difficulties affecting learning, **a discussion should be held directly between the student and the agency supervisor**. This should happen as soon as possible after the issue has been raised and strategies developed to address concerns and help improve the student's performance. Strategies and expectations should be documented and reviewed in supervision sessions. The course examiner should be advised and kept informed of the situation.

### **STEP 2: Student, Agency Supervisor, and the Professional Supervisor (Course Examiner)**

If following Step 1 doesn't resolve the issue, or if more serious issues arise (e.g. the student has breached professional conduct or finds meeting the Practice Standards especially challenging, or the placement is at imminent risk of being terminated), or the student feels they can't raise the issue with their agency supervisor, a meeting should be arranged with the Professional Supervisor and/or Placement Officer, student and agency supervisor as soon as possible. This meeting can be called by the student, agency supervisor, Professional Supervisor or Placement Officer. The Placement Officer and the Professional Supervisor should be advised in writing about the issues including details such as what, when, where and who.

A range of outcomes may be determined as result of the meeting (see 5.1). The outcomes of the meeting should be documented, including strategies to address issues and review dates.

### **STEP 3: The situation is monitored and reviewed**

Depending on the outcome of Step 2 a follow up meeting should be held between the student, Course Examiner and /Placement Officer to monitor the situation. The Program Coordinator may also be included if required. The outcome of any meeting should be documented and further action and/or strategies actioned if required and appropriate. If further issues are identified prior to the review date, a meeting of the parties will be called together as soon as possible. In some circumstances the placement will be terminated.

### 5.1 Outcomes from the resolution process

The outcome of attempts to resolve issues will vary depending on the nature and seriousness of problems raised and could include:

- i) The student being provided with additional information and guidance about agency or university policies
- ii) Clarification of expectations and changes to the students Learning Plan or supervision arrangements
- iii) Placement breakdown or termination: In this event, the University will discuss with the student their future placement options. A number of complex factors will be considered, including the reasons for the placement breakdown, the prior experience of the student, and the further learning needs of the student.
- iv) Assessing the student's performance during the professional placement, the Board of Examiners will decide whether the student be provided with another opportunity to undertake can alternative professional placement in that year or to recommend a fail grade for the placement. The Board of Examiners includes the Program Coordinator, Course Examiner & Placement Officer.
- v) In the event of a fail grade for the professional placement, the student is required to enrol again in the unit the following year and to undertake another placement.

### 5.2 Student initiated placement termination

A student may not simply 'quit' from a placement without first discussing the matter with the Agency Supervisor, Placement Officer and Liaison Officer. This is because the student's reasons for withdrawal need to be discussed in order to assess subsequent academic action that is appropriate to the circumstances. Failure to comply with this requirement could result in a fail grade.

### 5.3 Agency and or Liaison Officer initiated

Agencies may request termination of a student's placement for the following reasons:

- The Agency terminates the placement due to changes in their capacity, availability or other operational reasons not associated with the student (e.g. lack of appropriate work experiences, staff changes or sickness/ill health of field educator)
- An Agency may request and / or a Liaison Officer may withdraw a student from a placement where:
  - i. The student is consistently unable to perform satisfactorily with an appropriate or a reasonable level of supervision
  - ii. The student performs in a manner detrimental to the professional experience of other students
  - iii. The student breaches the legal, ethical or professional codes of the organisation providing the placement
  - iv. The student demonstrates gross negligence in the performance of an assigned duty
  - v. The student behaves in a manner deemed to constitute misconduct or gross misconduct
  - vi. The student fails to disclose information prior to commencing placement that impacts on their ability to meet duty of care requirements to themselves and

agency clients or staff.

**5.4 Information that must be provided to the university by the agency following a placement termination includes**

- Agency name
- Days completed
- Nature of the practice
- Learning outcomes achieved
- Learning outcomes not attempted
- Learning outcomes attempted and not achieved, and where appropriate the reasons why outcomes were not achieved.

## Section 6: Overseas Placement

Being exposed to a work environment in a different country with a different culture and language highlights to students the importance of cultural awareness and competence, good communication skills and can enhance global citizenship. There are several steps that need to be considered by the interested students before they decide to go overseas for their placements. Students are encouraged to contact the Placement Officer at [HES.support@usq.edu.au](mailto:HES.support@usq.edu.au) as early as possible (at least six months before they intend to start the placement) to explore overseas agencies that are willing to offer student placement to USQ students **and the implications of an overseas placement on PACFA accreditation.**

## Section 7: Policies Relating to Field Placement

### 7.1 PACFA

Students must adhere to the PACFA and ACA Code of Ethics while on placement. In accordance with these policies, behaviours that may result in harm to other students, professionals and/or clients and or inappropriate conduct including unsafe, illegal, unprofessional or unethical practice may result in students being withdrawn from field education, receiving a fail grade for the placement topics and no credit for hours worked.

### 7.2 University Policies

There are several policies to ensure that students get proper support and perform their placements upholding university's reputation. These are as follows:

[Equity in Education Policy and Procedure](#)

[Harassment and Discrimination Complaint Resolution for Students Policy and Procedure](#)

[Student Code of Conduct Policy](#)

[Student General Misconduct Procedure](#)

[Assessment of Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances Procedure](#)

[Students with a Disability Policy and Procedure](#)



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