

**A guide to supervision in
social work field education**

Revised Edition



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A guide to supervision in social work field education

INTRODUCTION

This *Guide to Supervision in Social Work Field Education* is for anyone wanting to learn about or refresh their knowledge about the theory and practice of supervising social work students during their field education placement.

The material in this Guide is the result of a collaborative effort between many Australian schools of social work, the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW - the professional body representing social workers in Australia) and several industry partners including the NSW Department of Human Services, Community Services and Centrelink.

It is the outcome of a project funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) that aimed to create an online program to prepare practitioners to supervise social work students during their placements. The program is open to both social workers and practitioners from other disciplines – anyone who wants to learn about the theory and process of supervising social work students during their field education placement.

The Guide content is adapted from the online program which is a masters' level subject, credited into many different postgraduate programs in Australia.

The website for this program is found at: <http://www.socialworksupervision.csu.edu.au/>

Please see the website for copies of this Guide and for links to the online masters subject and for other resources.

PREAMBLE

- Social workers acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the First Australians, whose lands, winds and waters we all now share, and pay respect to their unique values, and their continuing and enduring cultures which deepen and enrich the life of our nation and communities.
- Social workers commit to acknowledge and understand the historical and contemporary disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the implication of this for social work practice.
- Social workers are responsible for ensuring that their practice is culturally competent, safe and sensitive. (Australian Association of Social Workers. (2010). Preamble. *Code of Ethics*. p.5.)

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Our sincere appreciation is also extended to the organisations which allowed us to use and adapt aspects of their intellectual property in this Guide:

- Australian Association of Social Workers, for allowing us to use the Preamble from the *Code of Ethics* (AASW, 2010);
- Queensland Government, for allowing us to use and adapt clause 4(c) of the *Queensland Government Constitution (Preamble) Amendment Act 2010*.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This Guide can be used in a number of ways. For example:

- By sole practitioners interested in preparing to supervise a student;
- In small group sessions in organisations preparing to take social work students on placement;
- By facilitators running larger workshops for social work field educators.

People using this Guide for these or similar purposes also will need to have access to the following material:

- The Australian text: Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). Australia: Thomson.
- The Australian Association of Social Workers. (2008). *Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards*. Canberra: AASW. Available for free download online at: <http://www.aasw.asn.au/publications/ethics-and-standards>.
- The Australian Association of Social Workers. (2010). *Code of Ethics*. Canberra: AASW. Available for free download online at: <http://www.aasw.asn.au/publications/ethics-and-standards>.
- The Australian Association of Social Workers. (2003). *Practice Standards for Social Workers: Achieving outcomes*. Canberra: AASW. Available for free download online at: <http://www.aasw.asn.au/publications/ethics-and-standards>.

References to other online and paper-based resources are provided throughout the text of this Guide. However, it is recommended that readers download the three documents over the page and have access to the Cleak and Wilson text to get the most out of the material in this Guide.

STRUCTURE

This Guide is divided into four Sections:

Section 1	The nature of social work field education
Section 2	Standards and roles
Section 3	Educational foundations
Section 4	Phases of student supervision

Each section is divided into topics. Most topics contain questions, exercises and 'Reading reflection' segments which are intended to be used with reference to the text and online documents listed, as well as to the suggested readings and exercises. The 'Reading reflection' segments can be used as activities for supervision workshops, discussion with colleagues or in private study. Most sections end with suggestions for further reading, some of which are available online, and some of which are in books that can be found in libraries, or by enrolling in the online subject through the website <http://www.socialworksupervision.csu.edu.au/>

It is strongly recommended that readers begin a learning journal as part of reading the Guide. The learning journal can be a central point to keep notes from readings and exercises, as well as reflections about field education and becoming a field educator.

TERMINOLOGY

While different states and universities use different terms to describe field education and the various roles that people take in the process, wherever possible this document uses the terms in the *Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards* (AASW 2008). For clarification of terms, please refer to the glossary found at the back of this Guide.

Following the AASW terminology, practitioners who supervise social work students are referred to as either field educators (previously known as supervisor, field teacher, field instructor and other terms), or task supervisors (if they are the practitioner supervising the student's day to day work who is not a social worker). If there are two field educators supervising a student, these are termed co-field educators. External field educators are people supervising students who work outside the host organisation.



SECTION 1

The nature of social work field education

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

The aim of this Guide is to prepare practitioners to supervise social work students during their field education placements. Five elements characterise the Guide's philosophical approach. All are equally important. Firstly, the Guide is grounded in the ethical framework and educational and practice standards specified in the three documents from the AASW website that we recommend you download as companions to the Guide (see page 3). The ethical framework and standards are discussed in Section 2.

Secondly, a priority for educating social work students is the process of preparing them to engage with the many forms of complexity and diversity inherent in culturally competent and safe practice. The acknowledgement at the beginning of the Guide expresses this foundational principle in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Section 3 of the Guide addresses culturally competent and safe practice in more detail.

The third underlying principle is that field education is a collaborative partnership created between the student, the host organisation, the field educator and the university. Field education is a project shared between all these parties – so a partnership approach is necessary if it is to be successful. Community also can be a partner in field education, especially in those communities closely involved in their health and welfare services (for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and some disability communities). This principle is addressed later in Section 1.

The fourth principle on which this Guide is based is that adult learning theories

and ideas of experiential learning are essential for field education. This includes strategies to learn critical thinking and reflective practice as well as the ability to critically apply classroom learning in a work place setting (see Section 3).

Finally, the fifth principle underpinning the social work approach to field education is that a constructive supervisory relationship between the field educator and student is essential for a successful experience. While the supervision relationship is discussed throughout the Guide, Sections 3 and 4 in particular focus on how to develop constructive supervision relationships with students.

WHAT IS SOCIAL WORK?

While there are many definitions of what social work is and what social workers do, the following definitions are particularly useful.

The AASW in its *Code of Ethics* (AASW, 2010) has adopted the definition of social work approved by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (IFSW, 2000: <http://www.ifsw.org/en/f38000138.html>). The AASW is a member of the IFSW and is also committed to the ethical principles specified in the IFSW document *Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles* (IFSW, 2004: <http://www.ifsw.org/en/p38000324.html>).

The IFSW definition of social work used in the Australian *Code of Ethics* (AASW, 2010) is:

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. (AASW, 2010, p.6)

As part of its definition of social work, the AASW *Code of Ethics* (AASW, 2010) describes how 'Social work operates at the interface between people and their social, cultural and physical environments' (AASW, 2010, 1.3, p. 7). It draws a picture of a profession that works simultaneously with multiple dimensions of our world, including individuals, groups, systems, communities and the natural environment.

The document sets out five commitments that social workers make as they work towards maximising human potential and fulfilling wellbeing. These are:

- *working with Australia's First Peoples;*

- *working with and supporting people to achieve the best possible levels of personal and social wellbeing;*
- *working to address and redress inequity and injustice affecting the lives of clients, client groups and the socially disadvantaged;*
- *working to achieve human rights and social justice through social development, social and systemic change, advocacy and the ethical conduct of research. (AASW, 2010, p. 6).*

Some examples of social work practice, taken from the list in the AASW Code of Ethics (AASW, 2010), are:

- *engaging in interpersonal practice, including casework, counselling, clinical intervention;*
- *work with individuals, families, partnerships, communities and groups;*
- *advocacy;*
- *community work; and social action to address both personal difficulties and systemic issues;*
- *undertaking research, social policy development, administration, management, consultancy, education, training, supervision and evaluation to further human well-being and social development. (AASW, 2010, p. 7).*

WHAT IS FIELD EDUCATION?

The students make us come alive, and they hold us accountable. It is prestigious to be a field instructor. Sometimes they even give us gifts and feed us! Students give us a different perspective, they say something different. I enjoy it; they're young, they have big ideals. They keep us fresh and client-focused.

(Homonoff, 2008, p.163)

As Homonoff's quote illustrates, field education can be a great opportunity for field educators as well as students. It is also a great responsibility. To make the most of the opportunity and the responsibility, it is worth keeping in mind the theme throughout this Guide, which is:

Thinking ... Doing ... Being
 "As you think, so will you be.
 And as you are, so will you do."

Field education, which is often referred to in the literature as field experience, fieldwork or placement, is central to social work. It aims to provide opportunities

for students to integrate theoretical knowledge with their practice and to develop professional competencies.

The AASW defines field education thus:

Field education is a core component of the social work education process, and has the status of a full academic subject. It is a key activity for the student, providing opportunities to integrate content from classroom learning with practical experience, whilst at the same time developing competence in a range of social work skills. (AASW, 2008, p 37).

Most universities in Australia describe key principles that guide their field education programs and provide objectives for field education. Although each university has its own philosophical and educational approach and locates field education in its own social work curriculum, departmental, faculty and university context, there are strong similarities in definitions, underlying principles and course objectives. Partly, this is because the AASW has set national minimum requirements for field education, which must be met if graduates are to be eligible for membership of the professional body (AASW, 2008).

Universities are required to include a minimum of two placements in their social work courses, which together must include a minimum of 140 days or 980 hours of supervised practice in a workplace setting (AASW, 2008). The two placements must occur in different calendar years and offer a range of different social work experiences for students (AASW, 2010). In the following sections we explore how field educators can prepare to offer high quality field education experiences for social work students.

WHAT IS STUDENT SUPERVISION?

Before social work was taught in academic settings, social workers were trained or mentored in agencies by experienced social work field educators who taught them what social work was, how to perform social work tasks, how to build relationships and how to develop the necessary self-awareness for effective practice. When social work education moved into academia, a dual approach evolved, which consisted of classroom and field instruction. The process by which field educators facilitate a student's learning through practical training and professional development in a human service organisation is generally referred to as supervision.

Most social workers and human service practitioners have some experience with professional supervision. They have their own experiences as students, and may have witnessed other professional supervisions throughout their career. In social work, 'professional supervision' is not just line management or direction/assessment of performance. It includes support, education and other activities.



READING REFLECTION 1

REFLECT

Write some notes on your experience of supervision when you were a student. If you did not experience supervision during your student years, write some notes on your impressions of student supervision from what you have observed. Consider:

- Are your experiences mostly positive or negative?
- What kinds of tasks and activities were included in the supervisory process?
- If you were a student beginning a placement at the organisation in which you are employed, what would be some useful things a field educator should do as part of supervision?
- What lessons have you learnt that you will apply now that you are considering taking a student?

The AASW recommends one and a half hours of formal supervision for every five days (35 hours) in the field (AASW, 2008). Formal supervision between a field educator and a social work student usually takes place at a set time, which is often referred to as a supervision session, and is often focused on an aspect of a student's Education Plan (which is covered in detail in Section 4 of this Guide).

There also are opportunities for informal supervision throughout a student's entire placement. The way in which both parties make use of informal supervision will have an impact on the effectiveness of formal supervision. Whether formal or informal, supervision is an opportunity for:

- reflection and self-reflection;
- openness;
- support;
- trying new things;
- feedback;
- modifying old habits;
- students to develop professional competence, knowledge, skills and attitudes;
- facilitating personal and professional growth;
- assisting students to make connections between practical work and theory;
- role modeling.

>>

In Sections 3 and 4 of this Guide, we look more closely at what constitutes a good supervision relationship because we recognise that a placement is often only as good as the supervision relationship which nurtures it.

A good supervision relationship is one in which both student and field educator feel comfortable to give and receive constructive feedback, and in which the open expression of differences is seen as a healthy part of the education process. Under such conditions real learning, which opens people up to new ways of understanding, thinking, and behaving, can occur.

THE FUNCTIONS OF SUPERVISION?

As previously mentioned, social work supervision is an integral part of the social work profession's approach to practice. According to Kadushin (1985), professional supervision in social work and social welfare has three functions:

- Educative - developing the skills and knowledge of workers; acquiring professional competence; engaging in reflective practice;
- Administrative/Managerial - promoting and maintaining good standards of work; implementing agency policies; monitoring and improving work performance;
- Supportive - maintaining harmonious working relationships, morale and job satisfaction.



READING REFLECTION 2

REFLECT

- What has been your experience of these three functions? Has one been more predominant than another?
- Are there other aspects of supervision that are important, that are not captured by this definition? List them.

READ

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). Chapter 6. Australia: Thomson. Read the first few pages of Chapter 6, which adapts Kadushin's model for use with social work students. As suggested by Cleak and Wilson, make a photocopy of Exercise 1, which describes a series of tasks under each function, and use this as a checklist for a student's placement.

Since the development of this model, a plethora of supervision models has evolved (Tsui 1998, Munson 2002) and Kadushin's three functions have been developed further. For example, Morrison (2001) identifies four functions of supervision:

- Managerial/Normative - addresses the administrative tasks that are required by the organisation, including managing workloads
- Developmental/Formative - focuses on learning and professional growth
- Support - eliminate issues to reduce anxiety
- Mediation - relates to negotiating/engaging the worker with the organisation.

(Source: NSW Department of Human Services, Community Services)

Again, Morrison's framework has been developed for social work practitioners, not students. However, there may be aspects of this model that can be adapted for supervision with a student.

STUDENT SUPERVISION: A NEW PERSPECTIVE

The project team responsible for this Guide, in reflecting on the functions of supervising social work students, have come up with five functions that they believe encapsulate the key functions of this role:

- Education (doing, thinking, reflecting)
- Socialisation for professional identity (being)
- Support (thriving)
- Negotiation (mediating/advocating systems and relationships)
- Administration/management (knowing the workplace).



READING REFLECTION 3

EXERCISE

Using the project team's model of five functions, develop a list of tasks that you would classify under each. How does this expanded list of functions fit with your experience of supervising social work students, or how you would like to be supervised if you were a student?



Contextual challenges

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

The postmodern environment strongly influences the world of work, including occupations such as social work. In studying how to be an effective field educator, it is important to consider the impact of the socio-political-ideological environment. This involves thinking about not only how we understand social work and what it does, but how the environment affects what we can offer students, the kinds of experiences they will have and how these experiences are understood.

Postmodernism has been characterised as a period of fragmentation, uncertainty, plurality and diversity (Hugman, 2005). Bowles et al (2006) discuss how contested understandings of power, paradoxical effects of globalisation, technological changes and neo-liberal approaches to organising society, challenge traditional views of social work and how it operates. In many instances, large, stable social work departments have been replaced by smaller, inter-professional teams whose members move from job to job more rapidly than their predecessors. These workers compete with people from diverse disciplines for jobs with generic titles such as 'case worker', 'counsellor', 'sexual assault worker' or 'community development worker' rather than 'social worker'.

In an environment of increasing specialisation, fragmentation and bureaucracy, with growing demands to be accountable and to follow ever more detailed policy and procedures, social workers and other human service workers are in danger of losing their powers of professional discretion, and possibly their identity as a single profession. Yet Bowles et al (2006), Dominelli (2007) and McDonald (2007) all argue that social workers, with their skills of critical analysis, reflective practice, good communication skills and ethical frameworks, are well-placed to deal with such challenges.

The postmodern environment creates specific challenges for field education. For over a decade researchers and theorists have been warning about the increasing reluctance of organisations to accept students for workplace learning placements due to pressures to increase productivity, demonstrate outcomes against targets, and to operate with less resources (for example: Jarman-Rohde, McFall, Kolar & Strom, 1997; Raskin & Whiting-Bome, 1998; Barton, Bell & Bowles, 2005). Paradoxically, at the same time there is increased focus on the importance of workplace learning in professional courses. From the employers' perspective, there is also growing recognition that positive field education placements can improve recruitment and retention rates. For example, large amounts of funding are being devoted to increasing student placements in Australia's health system, through initiatives by Health Workforce Australia.

THE ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT: THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIP

The partnership principle in field education has a long history in social work as in other professions. Traditionally, supervising students has been part of most social workers' role descriptions. Organisations accommodate students from many professions as an accepted part of their role.

Organisations and organisational cultures powerfully influence the success of student placements. One of the first steps a field educator takes (whether a social worker or other professional) is to assess their organisation's potential to offer a quality learning environment. If an organisation encourages professional development opportunities, if mistakes are seen as learning opportunities, or if supervision is as much about development as about 'checking up' on employees, then it is likely that the organisation has a culture of learning that will be conducive to good student placement experiences.

It is important that potential field educators identify learning opportunities in their organisations for students in advance, before they arrive to start their placement. Examples of such preparation include:

- Making a list of possible roles, projects or tasks the students might take;
- Approaching other workers who might assist the students or allow them to observe their practice;
- Planning an induction to the organisation that includes key parts of the organisation and how they relate to each other, introductions to key people and visits to other services that relate to the organisation;

- Organising a physical space for the student, including access to computer systems, computers, phones etc.

This kind of anticipatory work is important for the student to feel welcome and valued. It is part of the field educator's function of 'Negotiation (mediating/advocating systems and relationships)' that we identified previously.

The field educator and their organisation are one of the key partners in field education. Field educators need to prepare themselves and their organisations for student placements. The other partners are the university and its field education staff, and of course the student. We explore the roles of each of the partners in Section 2 of this Guide.



READING REFLECTION 4

REFLECT

1. Think about your experience of social work placements - whether as a student, field educator, manager or observer of a placement going on in an organisation you were familiar with.
2. Can you identify times when partnership issues influenced the outcome of placement?
3. Have you experienced placements in which a good partnership facilitated the outcome of a placement, or a poor (or non-existent) partnership was a barrier hindering the student's or field educator's experience?

READ

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Chapter 2, 'Preparing to take a student: Supervisor'. *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). Australia: Thomson.

This chapter contains many useful exercises to help you prepare for the field educator role. It is suggested that you systematically work your way through this chapter, making notes in your learning journal as you complete the exercises.

A particularly useful emphasis in the chapter is on how important it is to be able to articulate your own vision of social work, and how you see your knowledge, values and skills, as well as being clear about your expectations with the student.



FURTHER READING

The following links and references will be particularly useful if you want to explore social work's macro environment in more detail. The first one is not a critical perspective, but rather a mine of information about social work's policy environment.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (<http://www.aihw.gov.au/index.cfm>). This site has a wealth of information about the health and welfare environment in Australia. This includes two regularly updated online books, *Australia's Health* (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010) and *Australia's Welfare* (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2009). There also are excellent online publications in a range of issues - click on the publications link on the AIHW site to see the latest releases.

Three sources with good critical analysis of the macro environment for social work are:

Giles, R., Irwin, J., Lynch, D., & Waugh, F. (2010). Exploring the context of learning (p3-16). *In the Field: From Learning to Practice*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Bowles, W., Collingridge, M., Curry, S., & Valentine, B. (2006). Social work in its environment. *Ethical Practice in Social Work an applied approach*, Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.

McDonald, C. (2006). *Challenging social work: the institutional context of practice*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Finally, two good articles and a chapter on partnership and working with the organisational issues are:

Camilleri, P., & Humphries, P. (2005). Creating synergy: Developing new forms of partnership between university and industry. *Australian Social Work*, 58(1) 26-35.

Lager, P. (2004). Field Education: Exploring the Future, Expanding the Vision. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 40(1).

Giles, R., Irwin, J., Lynch, D., & Waugh, F. (2010). Preparing for Learning in a Practice Setting. *In the Field: From Learning to Practice*, (pp. p47-66). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.



SECTION 2

Standards and roles

FIELD EDUCATION STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMS

One of the three documents we recommended that you download as part of reading this Guide is from The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW, 2008).

Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards.

www.aasw.asn.au/publications/ethics-and-standards

Three sections of this document are especially relevant to field education:

- Section 2.1.3, 'Principles for social work education'. Several principles for field education are specified (p. 7);
- Section 4.3, 'Learning for practice in field education'. Sets out detailed field education standards (pp. 13-18);
- Addendum One: Policy Regarding Field Education Assessment Criteria for Accredited Social Work Programs (AASW, 2008, p.47). This provides guidelines for how students' performance in field education can be assessed, using the AASW Practice Standards (AASW, 2003).

From one perspective, these standards could be seen as part of the global movement towards greater regulation (and deprofessionalisation). This document is much more detailed and prescriptive than its predecessor, and has moved closer to a notion of competency-based education.

On the other hand, in these times when students have to work as well as study, and higher education has become one of many competing priorities in people's

lives, greater clarity about what social work students need to be able to do is appreciated by all parties involved. Such clarity may also lead to more consistent standards of service: also a worthwhile aspiration.

There is another factor that needs to be taken into account when thinking about these standards. During the national discussions leading up to their introduction, social workers and educators alike were strongly in agreement that social work education, and field education in particular, should not be 'training' but rather professional education. This means that field education should not be about checking off 'black and white' competencies, but rather encouraging students to move towards ethical reflective practice and making professional decisions that they can justify in supervision.



READING REFLECTION 5

READ

Read Part 1 of the field education addendum (1.0) of *Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards* (AASW, 2008).
www.aasw.asn.au/publications/ethics-and-standards

REFLECT

Make some notes in your learning journal on the following:

1. How does the picture that emerges of social work courses compare with your vision of what social work should be?
2. From reading the AASW standards for field education (pp. 13-18), what has changed since you completed a placement, or, if you have not completed a social work placement as a student, how does this compare to your experience of observing social work placements?
3. What is your reaction to the requirement that field education curriculum and student outcomes are assessed against the social work practice standards?
4. Given the environment's various forces towards greater regulation and de-professionalisation of all occupations, do these standards push social worker education more towards a professionalised or de-professionalised version of practice? What grounds do you have for this impression?

THE AASW PRACTICE STANDARDS: CREATING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

A central requirement for field education in the *Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards* (AASW, 2008, p. 7) is that by the time they are completing their final placement, social work students must meet entry level requirements as outlined in the AASW Practice Standards (AASW, 2003). The Practice Standards document is another of the three documents we recommend you download as part of reading this Guide. (Australian Association of Social Workers. (2003). *Practice Standards for Social Workers: Achieving outcomes*. <http://www.aasw.asn.au/document/item/16>)

This requirement means that field educators now have to know about and take into account the AASW Practice Standards when supervising and assessing students. An additional way of preparing for a placement then, is to think through how the Practice Standards might be used in your workplace, in creating learning opportunities for students.

The Practice Standards provide a broad framework from which to conceptualise social work practice, which encompass six main areas of social work practice. They are:

- Direct Practice
- Service Management
- Organisational Development and System Change
- Policy
- Research
- Education and Professional Development

The Australian Education and Accreditation Standards (AASW, 2008) specify how the six areas can be portrayed as learning goals. Within these six areas, the challenge is for students and field educators to translate the broad goals into more specific objectives and activities, which are relevant to a particular organisation and the type of placement being offered.

Much of the literature about field education emphasises the importance of adults being self-directed in their learning. This fits nicely with the old social work adage 'start where the client/student is at'. While this is still an important foundation of every placement, setting the direction for a placement, and deciding on the key learning goals with the student, has become a complex negotiation between the university's expectations, the AASW's Practice Standards, and the host organisation's expected outcomes.



READING REFLECTION 6

READ

Australian Association of Social Workers. (2003). *Practice Standards for Social Workers: Achieving outcomes*. <http://www.aasw.asn.au/document/item/16>)

REFLECT

Make some notes about:

- Which of the six main areas of practice would be suitable for students to address in your organisation?
- Within each area of practice that is suitable, which key concepts could you assist a student to experience and address?
- How do the outcome standards and performance indicators fit with the practice in your organisation? How could a student demonstrate their competence in performing these minimum standards?

ETHICAL EXPECTATIONS: THE AASW CODE OF ETHICS

The AASW's *Code of Ethics* (AASW, 2010: <http://www.aasw.asn.au/publications/ethics-and-standards>) is the third downloadable set of expectations that field educators need to be familiar with, to successfully supervise social work students. Both the Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (AASW, 2008), and the *Practice Standards for Social Workers: Achieving Outcomes* (AASW, 2003) cite the code as their foundation for definitions of social work and what constitutes ethical practice.

It is expected that all social workers are familiar with the values and principles in their code as well as the responsibilities /standards of ethical practice. If you are not a social worker and will be supervising students, it is worthwhile to read the document and to understand the core values.

As many of the practice standards (AASW, 2003) and social work curriculum requirements involve ethics and critical application of the *Code of Ethics* (2010) to practice situations, it is inevitable that all social work students will have to discuss ethical dilemmas and questions during supervision sessions.



READING REFLECTION 7

READ

The Australian Association of Social Workers. (2010). *Code of Ethics*. Available for free download online at <http://www.aasw.asn.au/publications/ethics-and-standards>

Note the particular ethical requirements for social workers supervising students in Section 5.5.1.

REFLECT

- Are students in your organisation identified and treated in a way which meets the requirements for student supervision as outlined in the *Code of Ethics*?
- What kinds of ethical practice problems are students most likely to be exposed to during their placements in your organisation?
- Which of the values and ethical practice responsibilities are likely to be most important for students on placement in your organisation?
- What is the level of ethical risk students will experience in your organisation?

Having considered the three sets of standards and expectations that frame social work field education in Australia, we turn to examine the roles of the partners in the process. We begin with the organisation hosting the placement. Most universities have similar expectations of organisations, university and student roles. The lists below come from the Charles Sturt University social work program.

THE ROLE OF THE ORGANISATION

An agency, represented by its Director, CEO or other person with delegated authority, having agreed to accept a student for a field placement, has responsibility for the following:

- Ensuring that the staff involved in supervision have this activity formally recognised by including it in their statement of duties. This would include recognition of the commitment and time required by field

educators and task supervisors to perform this duty, including the following activities:

- preparation and planning of appropriate agency activities, including cases;
 - meetings, work with other agencies, relevant on-the-job experiences and meeting with other professional colleagues, administration of workload;
 - regular student supervision sessions;
 - attending joint meetings with the student and university staff; and
 - attending periodic university seminars in order to develop and consolidate supervision skills as well as increase practice knowledge and skills.
-
- Recognising the educational nature of a student field placement by differentiating the contribution made to the work of an agency by a student under supportive supervision, and the expectation of a staff member;
 - Providing and facilitating opportunities for the student to become familiar with the role of the agency, its staff, and the impact of its work to the wider community;
 - Accepting student participation, where appropriate, in a range of agency activities such as staff meetings, committees;
 - Making available, within the resources of the agency, office space, appropriate means of communication, and secretarial assistance required by the student in order to complete assigned tasks;
 - Making suggestions about which social workers would be appropriate to supervise students; and
 - Making the university aware of any matter, which might have a bearing on the continuation of an individual field placement or potential field placements in the future.





READING REFLECTION 8

EXERCISE

Sections 1 and 2 of this Guide look at what is involved in preparing to have a student. Using this information and the list of responsibilities of your organisation, draw up your own list of how your organisation prepares for a student. Once you have done this, identify any gaps and write down what else you would like to include on the list. How could you include clients in this process?

SPECIAL CASE: WORK-BASED PLACEMENTS

The situation where an organisation hosts a placement for one of its own employees is a special case involving additional roles and responsibilities for all the parties. These days, more students are under pressure to find ways of fitting field placement in with other responsibilities, particularly paid employment. Undertaking a placement in their place of work may be the only option for some students. In this situation, it is likely that at least one of the field educators will be a colleague of the student.



READING REFLECTION 9

EXERCISE

Think about any experiences of work-based placements you have experienced or observed. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages associated with the work-based placements you know about?



AASW POLICY PLACEMENTS IN A STUDENTS' PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT

The current AASW policy on placements in a student's place of employment states:

1. In order to provide a breadth of experience and to prevent conflicts of interest between employment and education roles, field education placements will be undertaken in a different context, organisation and field of practice to the student's place of employment.
2. This requirement may be waived if the university is satisfied that all other principles and policies set out in this document can be met.
3. If a placement is undertaken in a student's place of work, a written agreement signed by the organisation, university and student will be completed. This will include:
 - a. agreement that the employee is in a student role whilst on placement and that they are able to meet the educational requirements, principles and policies set out in this document.
 - b. allocation of learning experiences not involving the student's routine work responsibilities.
 - c. protected time whilst on placement that is separate from the duties carried out at work and includes time to complete reading, reflective learning and assessment activities related to the placement.
 - d. wherever practicable, provision of a field educator who is not the student's line manager or usual supervisor.
4. In exceptional circumstances the student may undertake two field placements in their place of employment. If the university approves this arrangement it must guarantee that all of the principles and policies of this document are met.
5. Exceptional circumstances must be defined by the university and be documented in the field education handbook.

(AASW, 2008, p.17)

There are a number of issues to consider when supervising a student who is employed by the organisation in which they are undertaking their placement, such

as the examples in the following points. This list is drawn from a range of sources, including Birkenmaier (2002) and Crisp, B. & Maidment, J. (2009). For each one, consider the implications for field education and your role as a field educator.

- A student's financial burden and the stress associated with this is significantly reduced when their placement is combined with a source of income.
- Students can set aside their career interests and personal learning goals to accept a placement that offers payment.
- As an employee, a student will already have established a connection and/or a commitment to the agency where he or she is undertaking their placement.
- As an employee, a student already will be familiar with the organisation's culture, its functions, professional expectations and relevant networks.
- Much of the anxiety associated with becoming a student in one's work place is related to changing roles and being seen as a student, rather than being seen as a practitioner.
- Organisations can learn a great deal from having one of their staff members step into a student role. This creates an opportunity for the organisation (through the student) to stand back, reflect on and evaluate certain aspects of its functioning.
- Experienced practitioners can resent having to undertake a placement, viewing it as a formality or hurdle to be overcome.
- A student who normally works in an organisation may be very reluctant to critically analyse aspects of the agency functioning.
- Students undertaking a work-based placement may feel compelled or they may be expected to assist the agency in any way needed without regard to the completion of learning objectives.
- Sometimes students will continue to carry out their usual work role in addition to work undertaken in their role as a student because they feel a responsibility to do so, even if it is not part of their student role description.
- Students who are normally in a managerial role at work can experience significant difficulties associated with becoming a student and being supervised by someone who they have worked with in another capacity.



Field educator roles

BECOMING A FIELD EDUCATOR AS A BOUNDARY ENCOUNTER

One of the major challenges practitioners face as they prepare for a student placement is the impact that taking a student will have. While taking a student will certainly take its toll on a field educator's time, it also can offer the opportunity to view their organisation, their professional identity, and their practice in new ways (Barton, Bell & Bowles, 2004). Part of this challenge is learning to talk about what you actually do, rather than just doing it instinctively, as Cleak and Wilson (2007) discuss.

One way to conceptualise becoming a field educator is to think about it as a boundary experience (or boundary encounter). Etienne Wenger (2009), a social learning theorist who works with organisations developing communities of practice, uses this term to describe what happens when one set of role expectations/identity/community of practice, meets another. He suggests that opportunities for reflection are maximised in this situation because at a boundary between two identities, the person has something against which to compare their existing individual or group identity. He argues that it is at the boundary of two or more sets of identity that reflection becomes possible.

If we consider becoming a field educator as a boundary encounter between two different identities - practitioner or manager and a field educator - then taking on the role of field educator becomes a learning opportunity for the field educator as well as for the student. It is likely that the student also will be at a similar boundary - particularly if they are attempting a placement in their place of work. In this case they will be juggling identities as student and practitioner.

This idea of 'boundaries in the landscape of practice' (Wenger, 2009) is a theoretical tool that can help us experience having multiple roles as learning opportunities rather than barriers - after all, multiple roles are a feature of our postmodern practice landscape, often highlighted in rural practice as well as field education.



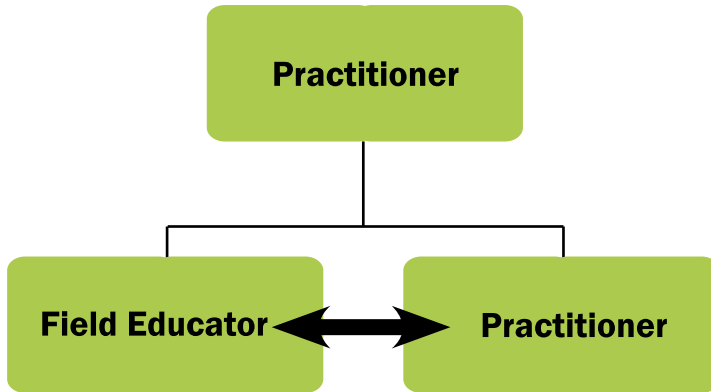


Figure 1: Becoming a field educator as a boundary encounter



READING REFLECTION 10

REFLECT

Write some notes in your learning journal on the key differences between the identities and roles of practitioner and a field educator.

What might be expected of you as a field educator that is not expected of a practitioner?

FROM PRACTITIONER TO FIELD EDUCATOR: A ROLE SHIFT

An important difference between a practitioner and a field educator is that a field educator needs to be able to articulate or demonstrate to a student how they conceptualise their own practice. It is often argued that there is a close correlation between practice frameworks and the way people teach that practice (Cleak & Wilson, 2007; Barretti, 2007). In particular, it is acknowledged that a practitioner's own style and the frameworks they use with clients parallel the dynamics established between a field educator and student. This highlights the importance for field educators of self-awareness, and their influence as role models for students.

The following questions may help in the process of self-awareness and the development of positive role model behaviours:

- What qualities comprise a 'good role model'? Why do you think this?
- How might your gender, race, age, sexual orientation and other factors influence your role model selection and the designation of desired characteristics?
- Are personality characteristics in a role model more significant than gender, race, age, etc., as role model selection criteria?

Another important difference between a field educator's role and some other kinds of professional supervision is that as a field educator you have to make a judgment as to whether the student's practice is at the required standard to pass the placement. Depending on the structures of the university in which the student is enrolled, a field educator will be required to participate in the assessment of the student's progress, as part of the judging process. All this involves a significant power differential that has to be negotiated and managed.



READING REFLECTION 11

READ

Cousins, C. (2004). Becoming a social work supervisor: A significant role transition. *Australian social work*, 57 (2), 175-185.

Although this article is written for social work practitioners supervising qualified social workers, a number of themes are relevant to supervision in social work field education. In particular, Cousins discusses the use of power and its impact on establishing and developing trust in the supervisory relationship. It is argued that because social work training discourages the use of power and hierarchy, many social workers are uncomfortable with their own use of power.

When social workers take on a supervisory role they can be reluctant to acknowledge any power imbalance between themselves and others, such as colleagues and students. It is not uncommon, for example, for field educators to struggle with the power they have in assessing a student's work performance. And, as Cleak and Wilson state, the power that is inherent in the field educator's role can be further >>

amplified or minimised by differences and similarities in age, gender, culture and experience.

EXERCISE

Working with power differences

Read the following statements and consider them in relation to your own approach to field education:

- My past negative experiences of power and authority make me uncomfortable with certain aspects of a field educator's role.
- I am very aware of the power I hold in my current position, when I use it, how and why. I am unsure how to counteract a student's fears of inadequacy and criticism, and the negative consequences this might have for their learning.
- Power differences do matter.
- Qualities of good supervision are curiosity, respect, hope and enthusiasm.
- Evaluation and assessment can take place in a supportive environment.

THE ROLE OF A FIELD EDUCATOR

Field educators fulfill various complex roles. Consider the following possibilities:

- You are a teacher, contributing and guiding a student's learning and education
- You are a role model to a student
- You are the assessor of a student's professional development and competency
- You may be seen as a mentor to a student
- You may be accountable for a student's performance of assigned tasks and learning
- You are the agency liaison with the university and between you and others
- You are an observer, and provider of feedback to a student
- You have your own responsibilities, workloads and duties, additional to your student's learning
- You may be a manager in your organisation, which means you also will have to manage your student
- You are a facilitator of your student's learning
- You are a supporter of a student



READING REFLECTION 12

REFLECT

- Which roles do you think are the most important?
- Are there any other roles you can think of that are not listed here?

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A FIELD EDUCATOR

Most universities in Australia share similar expectations of field educators.

Below is an example of Charles Sturt University's description of the specific responsibilities of the field educator:

- Having agreed to supervise a student, the field educator will provide an educational experience, which will help the student acquire some of the skills required for the practice of social work.
- The field educator ensures that the student's education plan is manageable and that the expectations of the student from the agency and field educator are realistic and appropriate for a particular placement.
- The field educator provides a range of experiences appropriate to the agency and to the level of competence of the student, which will enable the student to meet the expectations of each placement. These may include attendance at agency and inter-agency meetings, case conferences, the opportunity to observe the field educator and other agency staff at work, direct work with specifically chosen clients, work with collaterals, tasks undertaken by a range of other personnel in the social welfare field, where appropriate, observation and the processes of special facilities normally denied to members of the public, e.g. morgues, operating theatres, correctional facilities, closed courts.
- The field educator provides the student with on-going and regular supervision. This should result in programmed time for supervision sessions, which in most cases will occur on an individual basis and allow privacy for the discussion of all issues arising from the placement.

- The field educator provides, in most cases, a minimum of one hour's protected conference time each full time (35 hours) week and at least one hour of informal supervision for each student. Some beginning students may need more time than this.
- In addition, the field educator will make arrangements for the student to have access at other times, and the means of negotiating this made clear.
- The field educator provides constructive feedback to the student on assigned tasks and professional behaviour within the agency.
- The field educator requires the student to provide evidence of both the amount and quality of the work undertaken (e.g. student recording and note taking, keeping of diaries for both time management as well as professional process, direct observation of the student undertaking tasks).
- In conjunction with the student, the field educator completes the assessment forms required by the university and makes a recommendation on the student's performance.
- The field educator allocates time for appropriate consultation with university staff and where possible attends seminars on supervision and other professional matters organised by the university.
- The field educator informs the university of significant changes taking place in the agency, which could affect the placement.
- The field educator informs the university of significant changes to the placement arrangements or plan with the student. These may include significant periods of absence on the part of the field educator or student due to illness or other events, or it may include significant changes to staffing which may affect work-flow for the student.
- The field educator forwards the necessary reports to the university by the due dates.
- The field educator informs the university if any set of events arise which might put the student at risk of not successfully completing the requirements and/or expectations of placement.

- If the student is to participate in any active research involving human participants being undertaken by the agency as part of its operational activities, the field educator advises the student and university liaison visitor of the ethics approval processes undertaken by the agency in respect of the research activities in which the student is intended to participate.

The methods you use for guiding a student will most likely change for each role you adopt, as well as for the different tasks and different stages of the student's professional development. It is important that you and your student are clear about the boundaries of your respective roles and relationship, particularly in the following areas:

- The limits of a student's autonomy in undertaking work activities;
- A student's representation of the agency in public and/or with clients;
- The authorisation of official communications;
- A student's access to and use of agency resources; and
- The criticism of agency or other staff in relation to work practices and standards.



READING REFLECTION 13

REFLECT

- From your own experience as a student or field educator, what sorts of boundary issues can arise during the course of a placement?

EXERCISE

Case Scenario 1:

Your student Mariella is a mature-age experienced human services worker who is undertaking a social work degree in order to progress her career. She resents having to do a placement and you get the impression she believes she could do your job quite easily. You agree that perhaps there are some things she might be able to do better than you. During supervision, Mariella shows no interest in reflecting on her work, although she is happy to talk about her case work in general. She views supervision as a chance to debrief and relax. You are worried that you are not teaching her anything. What can you do about this?

>>

Case Scenario 2:

Ira has been on placement with you for six weeks. He often gets to your organisation late in the mornings. Sometimes he is only 10 or 15 minutes late but a few times he has been over half an hour late. You have talked to Ira about this on a number of occasions and he is very apologetic. He says that all his life he has never been on time for things and that it is something he is trying to work on. He seems to take your concern seriously but his behaviour does not appear to have changed. How seriously do you take this? How will you approach the situation?

REFLECT

- What do you think are the boundaries of supportive supervision?
- When might they blur with counselling?
- What are your own norms of confidentiality in relation to any personal problems experienced by a student?

A word about counselling

It is not appropriate for a field educator to provide personal counselling to a student. If such a situation develops, talk to the liaison visitor at the university, who can assist with information about professional counselling, which is usually offered free of charge by most universities. This can be arranged independently, by the student or through social work staff, with student permission.

CO-SUPERVISION ARRANGEMENTS

Increasingly, in a climate of scarce resources and out of recognition that there is much to be gained from having other partners with expertise in particular areas, a student may be placed with two field educators, referred to as co-field educators or with a field educator and a task supervisor. Co-field educators may or may not be located in the same organisation. Alternatively, a student can be placed with a field educator and a task supervisor, who is a person with expertise in an area but who does not have social work qualifications. The field educator and task supervisor may or may not be located in the same organisation.

These types of placements provide valuable opportunities for students to experience practice in settings that are not traditional areas of social work practice and to work closely with other disciplines. On rare occasions, two co-field educators and a

task supervisor may be responsible for supervising a student. Therefore, the field education partnership can potentially involve representatives from the university, two separate parts of the same organisation, and/or from two different organisations.

The partnership between the groups is important and a high level of formal and informal liaison and support is encouraged between university liaison staff, field educators, task supervisors and students. Because of the number of parties involved and their different roles and functions, the partnership can become quite complex. It is essential for all parties to have clearly delineated roles and to clarify how the partnership will operate.

The importance of establishing clear channels of communication between all parties is highlighted in a paper by Kathleen Henderson titled *Work-based Supervisors - The Neglected Partners in Practice Learning*. You can download the PowerPoint presentation of this paper at <http://www.jswec.co.uk/2008old/programme.asp?day=2>). The paper explores the experiences of task supervisors in field education in the UK. In this study, the authors found that task supervisors commented on the power imbalance between themselves and field educators, which they felt was perpetuated by university staff who communicated largely with the field educators.



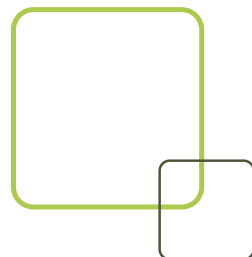
READING REFLECTION 14

READ

Coulton, P., & Krimmer, L. (2005). Co-supervision of social work students: A model for meeting the future needs of the profession, *Australian social work*, 58(2) 154-166.

REFLECT

What are your experiences/observations of co-supervision arrangements for students? List three benefits and three barriers from the field educators' perspectives.



THE ROLE OF AN EXTERNAL FIELD EDUCATOR

An external field educator is a qualified social work practitioner who undertakes the role of field educator from outside the agency where the student is on placement. In most cases where an external field educator is required, the person supervising the student's day to day activities from within the agency will be a co-field educator who is a task supervisor (see more on this under 'The role of a task supervisor', which follows this section).

In most cases, the external field educator is a person who is familiar with the agency and has expertise in the agency's field of practice. An external field educator: provides supervision to the student at a negotiated rate of time; assists a student to consider their work within the context of a social work practice model(s); helps a student to make conceptual links between theory and practice; discusses field placement issues as they relate to the *AASW Code of Ethics* (AASW, 2010); helps the student to develop and review Education Plan objectives related to social work; and assists a student with their developing professional identity as a social worker.

Being an external field educator in an off-site role can be difficult, as the person does not have easy access to: information about the organisational culture of the field placement agency; day-to-day happenings at the field placement agency; and day-to-day observation of the student's performance.

In order to overcome these difficulties, it is suggested that:

- the co-field educators establish open lines of communication from early in the field placement (consider having two to three joint supervision sessions early in the field placement);
- all parties take part in all the university liaison contacts;
- division of labour and roles are clarified early in the field placement, and preferably written into a supervision agreement; and
- all parties feel free to contact their university liaison visitor to discuss any difficulties they may be having in relation to co-supervision.

THE ROLE OF A TASK SUPERVISOR

The task supervisor is sometimes termed the co-field educator. The task supervisor is an experienced human services worker who isn't social work qualified or a new social worker with less than two years' experience since graduation. The task supervisor is usually located within the same agency as a student although

sometimes this person is located in another agency. He/she provides day-to-day direction to a student.

Task supervisors:

- orient a student to the agency and its operations;
- in conjunction with the field educator, provide supervision of the field placement project/task;
- contribute to a student's understanding of practice issues and the operations of the agency;
- oversee the work of a student on a day-to-day basis;
- help to develop and review relevant agency-specific Education Plan objectives with the student;
- whenever possible, participate in liaison meetings with the student and field educator; and
- negotiate other requirements of the agency.



READING REFLECTION 15

REFLECT

- What specific boundary issues might arise between off-site field educators and on-site task supervisors?

THE UNIVERSITY'S ROLE

One of the key roles of the university is to establish and maintain a partnership between all parties. Roles of specific university staff are detailed below. Other tasks of the university include:

- Developing an educational philosophy within which the field education subjects can operate;

- Setting and maintaining the standards regarding field education and its organisation;
- Articulating the ways in which the educational philosophy, standards, and assessment can facilitate the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for the practice of social work, including tasks, expectations and assignments;
- Making decisions about the suitability of each agency, field educator and field placement and formally contracting with the agency and field educator on behalf of the university;
- While students may suggest potential resources for field placement and supervision, the formal negotiations and final decisions on where students will be placed will be undertaken by field education staff;
- Preparing students for field placement including work readiness, ethical awareness and awareness of occupational health and safety issues. Some universities have developed formal tools to assess fitness for practice. Student must achieve satisfactory results in these assessments to be eligible to commence a placement;
- Regular liaison and negotiation between student, field educator and agency. Most universities are able to provide an on-site visit by a university liaison visitor twice during each field placement. When this is not possible, for example in some rural locations, in addition there will be telephone and/or video conferences near the beginning and ending of each field placement. In exceptional cases only will an on-site visit be replaced by additional telephone or video conferences;
- Ongoing evaluation and revision of the field education program, and the ongoing monitoring of resources required for the maintenance of standards;
- Providing documentation and subject materials to agencies, field educators and students;
- Providing on-going education, through seminars, workshops and readings, on supervision and current practice to field education and agencies;
- Providing administrative support in the form of appropriate forms of communication;

- Providing debriefing for students and field educators at the end of field placement;
- Facilitating feedback from the field and students for curriculum development purposes;
- Final assessment of student outcome and recommendation of grade - satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

THE UNIVERSITY LIAISON VISITOR

Cleak and Wilson (2007) identify the three main functions of liaison as:

1. Monitoring and evaluation - assessing the quality of the student's placement experience and the extent to which the aims of the placement have been achieved. The liaison visitor also plays a role in monitoring and assessing a student's performance, in conjunction with the field educator and student.
2. Education - the liaison visitor is the link between classroom teaching and the organisation and provides educational support for the placement.
3. Support and problem-solving - the liaison visitor provides support, problem solving and mediation if difficulties develop during placement.

Most universities also describe a range of responsibilities for the liaison visitor. These include monitoring that:

- The Education Plan is being used as an integral part of the field placement process;
- The student is making satisfactory progress and fulfilling the aims of the field placement to that point in time. If not, the liaison visitor must ensure that remedial steps are negotiated that clarify the responsibilities of all parties, and notify students in writing that they may be at risk of failure;
- The field educator is satisfied that the student is properly utilising the range of learning experiences offered in that agency, and that the student is conducting him or herself in a manner consistent with professional staff in the agency;

- The student is being provided with social work experiences which will enable the expectations of the field placement to be met, including time to reflect upon the work undertaken and integrate it with other aspects of the course;
- Functional and effective communication is occurring between the student, the field educator and the agency, as it impinges on the student's contract in the agency;
- The student is able to make use of the field placement in terms of developing and consolidating social work knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and able to integrate it with subjects in the course;
- The organisation is aware of and meeting its occupational health and safety responsibilities for students on field placement.



READING REFLECTION 16

READ

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Chapter 16, 'Roles and Responsibilities of the Training Institution'. *Making the Most of Field Placement* (2nd Ed.). Australia: Thomson. It describes the liaison role and liaison meetings.

REFLECT

- Think back to your own experience(s) of liaison, either as a student, field educator or task supervisor. How did the liaison visitor carry out each of the three functions identified by Cleak and Wilson?
- For a moment, think about your ideal liaison visit. How could the liaison visitor assist you in your role as field educator? What sort of things could you do to ensure that you and a student make the most out of liaison visits? How would you prepare for each visit?



THE FIELD EDUCATION COORDINATOR

The field education coordinator has the overall responsibility for the field education program.

Although this role may vary slightly from university to university, in general the field education coordinator's responsibilities include:

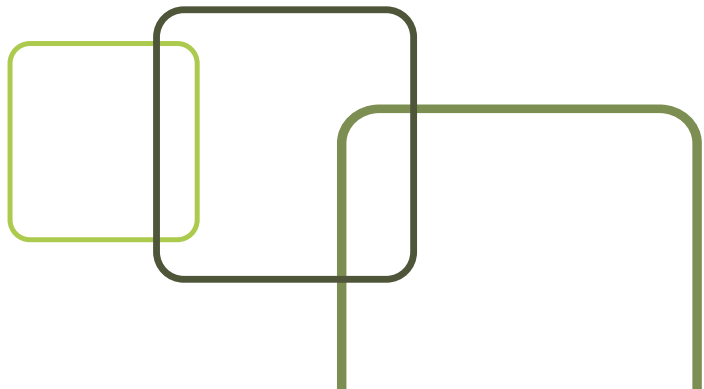
- Developing a curriculum to support field practice, which includes guidelines for learning, minimum standards and assessment at each level of a student's education;
- Developing and maintaining a well resourced field education program;
- Providing education, training and support to field educators;
- Maintaining standards and planning during pre-placement, placement and post-placement; and
- Allocating students and liaison staff and ensuring that adequate supervision is provided.

THE STUDENT'S ROLE

Students have responsibility for the following:

- Developing and adhering to the Education Plan to be developed in consultation with the field educator and liaison visitor;
- Taking the initiative in seeking to have the learning plan re-negotiated when necessary;
- Behaving in a professional manner with respect to the following:
 - punctuality, dress, respect for clients and staff of the agency;
 - attendance and participation in agency meetings;
 - adherence to agency policy including that on occupational health and safety, EEO etc, confidentiality, use of agency resources, completion of reports and forms, accounting for the use of time, after hours work with clients, termination of cases on leaving the agency;
 - resolution of disputes and conflicts;

- practicing within the guidelines of the AASW Code of Professional Ethics;
 - working within university and agency field education guidelines;
- Using field placement experience to learn about a range of tasks and functions performed by the agency regardless of the specific foci of the particular field placement;
 - Exploring theoretical material relevant to field placement experience;
 - Preparing for and participating in regular supervision sessions with field educators and the joint conferences between student, field educator, and field education staff;
 - Being willing to engage in self-evaluation and to receive constructive feedback;
 - Completing all field placement and assessment tasks in the subject and in the Education Plans within the negotiated time frames;
 - Facilitating communication between field and school;
 - Critically evaluating field placement experience and identifying priorities for future learning;
 - Appropriately terminating with clients, field educators and other agency staff;
 - Taking the initiative in discussing disputes with the most appropriate person field educator, liaison visitor, subject coordinator, or course coordinator.





SECTION 3

Educational foundations



Working with complexity and diversity in field education

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

Diversity characterises humanity. Difference in values, attitudes, culture, ethnicity, social practices, political beliefs, sexuality, religion etc., mean that people hold many different world views and make very different meanings of life conditions. Such diversity must be appreciated, respected and integrated into social work practice.

(Tesoriero, 2006, p. 127).

Tesoriero points out that diversity includes a wide range of differences and it is essential that social workers and social work students develop knowledge, skills and self-awareness for effective practice with diverse populations. However, developing an understanding of the experiences and cultures of a diverse range of people is a challenging process. Miu Chung (2008, p.1) points to the complex nature of working with diverse groups when he explains that ‘...each person not only carries many sets of culture, but also is situated in different social locations, the culture of which may not be coherent to the cultures that she or he carries’. Living in a globalised world adds to this complexity as ‘...new knowledge and far away places enter our personal and professional world through the cross-border movement of people, information technology and the media, and have to be dealt with somehow’ (Tesoriero, 2006, p. 128).



READING REFLECTION 17

REFLECT

Take some time now to think about the sets of cultures that make up part of your world. Jot down your ideas and think about your experience of each in relation to the following concepts, which help us to differentiate between cultures (Gannon, cited in Maidment & Egan, 2004, p. 28)

1. **Time:** For example, does the culture require people to meet deadlines and complete tasks or are people very flexible with time commitments?
2. **Power:** How is power used and experienced by different people?
3. **Activity:** What sort of activity is valued, for example just being there or doing something?
4. **Relationships:** Are they organised on a collective or individual basis?
5. **Space:** How is territory understood?

Consider how you might use this exercise with a student. What frameworks can assist us and strengthen our capacity to provide effective supervision to students working with people from outside their own cultural context?

A NOTE ABOUT CRITICAL REFLECTION

Throughout their social work education, and particularly in field education, students are encouraged to adopt a critically reflective approach to social work practice. Critical reflection provides us with a framework to examine our own experiences, to explore our feelings and to challenge our underlying values, beliefs, assumptions, biases and cultural positions before accepting an idea or an event. It is a framework that is particularly relevant to working with diversity as it not only facilitates greater self-awareness and the capacity to be reflexive but it incorporates critical theory. This is based on an understanding of how the concepts of power, oppression and inequality determine personal and structural relations.

As Mullaly states:

‘...practitioners are required to analyse how the socially constructed divisions of ‘race’, gender, class, sexuality, age and disability, and the impact of differential access to resources, interact to define the life experiences of individuals and communities (Mullaly, 1997, p.109).’

It is important to engage in a reflective process whilst undertaking the readings and exercises in this Supervision Guide in recognition that increased self-awareness and the ability to think critically are essential for working with diversity.

ENGAGING WITH DIFFERENCE



READING REFLECTION 18

READ

Armour, M., Bain, B., & Rubio, R. (2004). An evaluation study of diversity training for field instructors: A collaborative approach to enhancing cultural competence, *Journal of Social Work Education*, 40(1), 27-38.

The authors describe a diversity-training program for field educators, which arose out of field educators' stated lack of readiness and desire to address diversity issues. Interestingly, this program focused on field educators' 'avoidant behaviors' and developing ways of increasing their ability to be more open in addressing diversity issues with students. Active learning to increase self-awareness, the capacity for self-examination and the use of the supervisory relationship to address differences are identified as ways of advancing cultural competence.

LEARNING JOURNAL

Draw up 'An Agreement With Self', where you list your goals for working on diversity issues related to yourself, your supervision with a student and your organisation. This also may be something you could ask a student to do and you could use it throughout a placement, in the same way as you might use a learning plan. It also could become part of a student's learning plan.

MULTIPLE AND COMPLEX PERSPECTIVES

Fook, Ryan and Hawkins remind us that there are many perspectives on any one situation and that these perspectives can be ‘...diverse, contradictory and changing’ (Fook et al, 2000, p 213). They emphasise the importance of students developing an awareness of their own class, cultural, social and historical background and perspectives and educating students ‘...not to other people or situations but to locate themselves, their personal interpretations, experience and behaviour squarely in the picture’ (p 214).



READING REFLECTION 19

REFLECT

You will need to do this exercise with someone, preferably with a colleague who enjoys reflection and being creative. Put aside 45 minutes.

Each person should:

Think about your own background and experience of the world as a child growing up. What was your understanding of where you belonged in the world? Think about your school life, home life, family, friends, community, associations, religious affiliations, sense of place, spiritual, political beliefs, degree of safety and security, your values and anything that was important to you.

If you can, imagine that world as a system.

Now on a large piece of paper using whatever coloured pencils or textas you like, draw how you remember yourself to be in relation to that system. While you are drawing, think about your emotional experience. Take no more than 10 minutes for this part. Don't worry about your drawing ability as it isn't important here.

With your colleague, take it in turns to firstly explain your picture and then discuss the following:

- What feelings do you have as you look at the picture?
- Your use of color and any symbols
- What does this exercise tell you about your experience of difference?

Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000) explain that social work education should facilitate people's capacity to:

- identify multiple and diverse experiences, perspectives, and appreciate how and why these might have developed;
- understand how the perspectives of all people (including yourself as supervisor and student) might have developed, and recognise that people may have more than one perspective;
- identify how their own perspective influences the situation, and develop a work plan based on different perspectives, identifying what might be shared and what might not be shared by people (p 214).



READING REFLECTION 20

MULTIPLE AND COMPLEX PERSPECTIVES

Choose a case, problem or situation and think about how a student could work through each of the steps that Fook, Ryan & Hawkins (2000) outline. You might like to do this yourself, or undertake it as a professional development exercise in your organisation.

CULTURAL TENSION

In an interesting study, Miu Chung (2008) explored how social workers in Canada and their cultures interacted when working with clients from different cultures. Miu Chung has developed a useful, conceptual analysis of the patterns of cultural tensions among the cultures of worker, client, organisation, and the social work profession that participants of the study encountered, which is summarised below.

Type 1-A Tension: Client's Culture versus Dominant Culture.

This type of tension is manifested when the social workers representing the socio-organisational cultures work with clients whose cultures are different from the organisational and social cultures. For example, child protection participants struggled between the differing understandings of child abuse between the law and their ethnic minority clients.

Type 1-B Tension: Client's Culture versus Organisational Culture.

This is cultural tension that happens at an organisational level.

Type 2-A Tension: Worker's Culture versus Dominant Culture.

There is tension between the cultural minority worker's own culture and the dominant culture.

Type 2-B Tension: Organisational Culture versus Worker's Culture.

This type of cultural tension is an extension of the one between the worker and the dominant culture. For example, participants who come from cultures that value family experience tensions with an organisational culture that encourages the family to place its elderly members in institutions.

Type 2-C Tension: Worker's Culture versus Client's Culture.

Miu Chung found that the Type 2-C Tension, caused by both the cultural similarities and differences between workers and their clients were the most complicated and critical tensions that social workers, particularly those from the ethnic minority background, had to encounter in their daily practice.



READING REFLECTION 21

READ

Read Miu Chung's article and consider the following questions:

- What is your own experience of each of the tensions described? Try and think of an example for each one.
- What was (is) its impact on you, your organisation and your client(s)?
- What conflicts, dilemmas and pressures caused by these tensions do you imagine a student on placement in your organisation might experience and why? (Keep in mind that Miu Chung suggests conflict is more likely than not to occur during training.)

REFLECT

1. Read Miu Chung's article and think about how you would discuss this with a student.

2. A student could prepare a short presentation to you based on his or her observations and experience of cultural tension, using Miu Chung's conceptual framework.
3. How could a student identify the differences and similarities between themselves and the clients with whom they are working in your organisation? Consider what this would mean to them.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AND NON-WESTERN PERSPECTIVES

The Australian social work profession has been part of the tragic history of Indigenous disadvantage and continues to have a role in ongoing colonial practices. Social work placements can provide students from all cultural backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social work students, with an opportunity to explore their developing professional identity. This occurs within a range of culturally diverse learning contexts, including field education opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. In order for students to prepare themselves appropriately for these placements, it is important that they critically analyse and reflect on a range of knowledge, values and skills which can support their learning journey.

A sound knowledge of the history of Aboriginal Australia nationally as well as the history of the local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community in which the placement is located is an important starting point. This involves learning about the historical and political context of Indigenous Australia, the role of the social work profession in these contexts as well as recognising the privilege of whiteness in our society and how this impacts on social work practice.

Understanding white privilege involves acknowledging the pervasive dominance of Euro-centric worldviews in Australian social work theories and practices (Young, 2004). For non-Indigenous social work students and their field educators, "Because I am white I...?" is a powerful and challenging question on which to critically reflect and respond. It invites consideration and naming, often for the first time, that white is a colour and political position that bestows privilege and power. For social work students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, recognition that whiteness is the colour of privilege also can explain to some extent the pressure to assimilate into the dominant white culture.

A discussion about whiteness also provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social work students and field educators with an opportunity to consider how this privilege impacts on them personally and professionally. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social work students and field educators with fair skin, their experience of whiteness may be complex and contradictory. For these workers, skin colour can provide a mixed message to their non-Aboriginal peers and to their Aboriginal communities. Fair skin can be seen as a major barrier because it does not reinforce the stereotype of an Indigenous person. While it is acknowledged that skin colour can result in difficulties about how one is perceived, it is important to stress that cultural disconnection is not based on skin/colour tones alone but also on experience and socialisation (Zubrzycki & Bennett, 2006).

Green and Baldry (2008) propose a reinterpretation of some of the principles of Western critical social work, including social justice, emancipation, human rights, empowerment, self-determination and respect. They also suggest that Indigenous specific concepts such as decolonisation, and Indigenous world-views that incorporate an understanding of land and family and their importance in social relations and wellbeing must become part of social work practice.

Another critical step for social work students in the development of their ability and capacity to work respectfully and safely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities is for them to reflect on the processes and meaning of the work personally and professionally. This means continually reflecting on how and why they are working with Aboriginal people and communities, what is the purpose of their involvement, what values and assumptions underpin their practice and what impact does the work have on them personally and professionally? Embarking on this journey is as much about reflecting on process as it is about becoming a competent, safe and responsible practitioner.

These reflections also are pivotal in developing the cultural courage needed to challenge racism, become an advocate, make community connections and develop relationships which are characterised by deep listening and humility (Zubrzycki & Bennett, 2006). These are the fundamental skills and values which all students and field educators need to have in order to engage in a process that is hopeful and empowering for them and for the Aboriginal people with whom they work.

Working alongside people requires cultural supervision and mentoring. Additional areas of knowledge which could support students to develop the capacity to work respectfully and safely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities are:

- learning about local cultural protocols (<http://www.workingwithatsi.info/content/FYU.htm>);

- recognising that Indigenous people speak a range of languages, including Aboriginal English, and that in order to overcome language barriers it may be necessary to access a local interpreter;
- conducting projects or research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that needs to be guided by a range of the ethical principles and processes such as those developed by the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (<http://www.ahmrc.org.au>); and
- taking the necessary time for trust to develop. Students will need to be prepared to spend a lot of time just listening and ‘yarning’ with people before they can embark on any specific projects or work with the community.

The role of cultural supervision and mentoring

A social work field education experience which involves social work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities can expose students to a range of exciting challenges and learning opportunities. The social work supervision relationship ideally provides a safe context in which these areas of learning and development can be discussed and analysed. It is important, however, to acknowledge that cultural supervision and mentoring should, alongside social work supervision, be part of the process of supporting the learning experiences of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students.

This could involve a supervisory or mentoring relationship with another Indigenous person or a group of Indigenous people, such as a reference group. They may help the student to understand more deeply how to make sense of a range of complex cultural dimensions in their practice. Cultural supervision and mentoring also can facilitate the process of vouching, where a non-Indigenous person in particular is identified by the Aboriginal community as being a culturally safe and responsible person for Aboriginal people to work with.





READING REFLECTION 22

READ

Green, S., & Baldry, E. (2008). Building Indigenous Australian Social Work, *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 61, No. 4. December 2008, pp. 389-402.

Zubrzycki, J., & Bennett, B. (in partnership with an Aboriginal reference group). (2006). Aboriginal Australians. In Chui, W. H., & Wilson, J. (Eds.). *Social work and human services best practice*. (pp. 192-210). Annandale, NSW: The Federation Press.

REFLECT

Think carefully about what the following concepts mean to you :

- 'The Aboriginal problem'
- Whiteness
- Cultural courage
- Cultural safety
- Social justice
 - emancipation
 - human rights
 - empowerment
 - self-determination
 - respect.

Now, where has your understanding of these concepts come from?

1. Think about your own experience and knowledge of Indigenous values, perspectives and world views in relation to these concepts? What learnings would you want to share with a student?
2. What would you like to explore further with a student and how might you support one another to broaden your collective understanding?
3. What do you think a student needs to know about their own values, social work values and principles and how they relate to Indigenous perspectives?
4. What strategies could your organisation develop, expand upon or use to increase its cultural understanding and awareness?



FURTHER READING

Young, S. (2004). Social work theory and practice: the invisibility of whiteness. In Moreton-Robinson, A. (Ed.). *Whitening race: essays in social and cultural criticism* (pp. 104-118). Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Zubrzycki, J., & Bennett, B. (in partnership with an Aboriginal reference group), (2006). Aboriginal Australians. In Chui, W. H., & Wilson, J. (Eds.). *Social work and human services best practice* (pp. 192-210). Annandale, NSW: The Federation Press.

Giles, R., Irwin, J., Lynch, D., and Waugh, F. with Sylvia Winton. (2010). Practice Learning: Refugees and Asylum Seekers, *In the Field: From Learning to Practice*, (pp. 195-213). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.

Giles, R., Irwin, J., Lynch, D. and Waugh, F., with Karen Menzies. (2010). About the Aboriginal Experience: From Learning to Practice. *In the Field: From Learning to Practice* (pp. 214- 229). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.

WEB RESOURCES

State and Federal government departments have some resources for working with Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander peoples and with people from culturally diverse backgrounds. Here are some from Victoria:

Cultural Diversity Guide

http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/multicultural/downloads/cultural_diveristy_guide_2006.pdf

Cultural Competence Guidelines and Protocols

<http://eccv.org.au/library/doc//CulturalCompetenceGuidelinesandProtocols.pdf>

Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework

<http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/indigenous-initiatives/practice-guides/aboriginal-cultural-competence-framework>



Creating a positive learning environment

ADULT LEARNING THEORIES

Part of being an effective field educator involves knowing how adults learn. Knowles (1990) identifies six principles of adult learning. These are:

1. Adults are internally motivated and self-directed;
2. Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences;
3. Adults are goal oriented;
4. Adults are relevancy oriented;
5. Adults are practical;
6. Adult learners like to be respected.



READING REFLECTION 23

EXERCISE

How might you incorporate the six adult learning principles listed to facilitate a student's learning?

Write down some ways you could use adult learning principles to facilitate a student's learning during a social work placement. You could use a previous experience with a student, or think back to when you were a student on placement.

Now consider the following list of suggestions and how you could apply them to the student placement you were considering above.

- Adult learners may resist learning if it is seen as something that is imposed on them. Adults learn best when they are autonomous. Therefore, aim to foster a student's self-direction and individual motivation.
- Establish tasks and projects that reflect a student's interests. Show a genuine interest in his or her thoughts, opinions and experiences and acknowledge their preferred learning style.

- Set up learning so that a student can gradually take on more responsibility.
- Assist students to draw on their own experiences when problem solving, reflecting and applying theories.
- Help students to examine any biases they have, based on their own life experiences
- Adults learn when they need to. In other words, they are goal focused. Your role is to facilitate a student's readiness for learning by providing experiences that are clearly linked to their client, to field education, to personal goals and/or real case studies as a basis for learning.
- Ask reflective and clarifying questions. Adult learners want to know the relevance of what they are learning so it is important that you ascertain what they expect to learn prior, during and after an experience.
- Adults are enabled to work with the emotional content of a task.
- Promote active participation by allowing students to try things and provide practice opportunities in assessment, interviewing, and intervention processes.
- Demonstrate respect by acknowledging the experience a student brings to placement, by regarding them as an equal and encouraging the free expression of ideas.

Source: Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative. (2007). *The Clinical Educators' Resource Kit*. Retrieved from www.qotfc.edu.au/resource/index.html?page=65375.

Adult learners also have different ways of approaching learning and there are various classifications of learning styles and strategies. A well-known model of experiential learning, which many of you will be familiar with, comes from the work of Kolb (1984), who identified four main learning strategies that most people draw on. Although each person's learning style describes their preferred way of learning, people need to move outside of their preferred style in order to maximise learning.

The four learning strategies are:

1. Concrete Experience - a person prefers participation and personal experience.
2. Reflective Observation - a person prefers watching, observing and interpreting events.
3. Abstract Conceptualisation - a person prefers thinking and identifying relationships between concepts.
4. Active Experimentation - a person prefers doing and applying their knowledge and skills.

Learning styles can be influenced by past experiences, education, work and the learning situation. It is important to recognise that they are not fixed and that they can be adapted according to context and what is being learned. Nevertheless most people still favour one style of learning. There are various classifications of learning styles that you may like to become more familiar with.

The main point is that adults have preferred learning styles and once you are aware of learning styles, and the preferred learning style of a student, you will be better able to identify areas in need of improvement and design strategies to enhance learning.

Note that most people feel comfortable with someone who has the same approach to learning as they do because it seems easier to understand their approach to a new situation.



READING REFLECTION 24

READ

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Assessing Your Preferred Learning Strategies. *Making the Most of Field Placement* (2nd Edn.). (pp.19-23). Australia: Thomson.

Giles, R., Irwin, J., Lynch, D., and Waugh, F. (2010). Learning Theories and Practice Learning. *In the Field: From Learning to Practice*, (pp. 17-29). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.

REFLECT

What strategies might you adopt to work with students who have a different learning style from you?

How might knowledge of learning styles assist in dealing with conflict?

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKERS

Before we examine how to assist students to develop their capacity for critical thinking, we will briefly describe the concepts of critical social theory, critical social work practice, critical reflection and critical thinking. These terms are often confused and their relationship to each other is unclear. For example, some people define critical thinking as if it is the same concept as critical reflection, whilst others define critical thinking as a set of reasoning skills that includes reflective abilities.

Critical Social Theory

Critical social theory is a multidisciplinary knowledge base that combines perspectives drawn from political economy, sociology, cultural theory, philosophy, anthropology, and history. It is inspired by an emancipatory intent (Bronner, 1994.) In other words, it has a goal of liberation and abolishing social injustice. It is largely attributed to the Frankfurt School of the 1930s, which was initially a reworking of Marxist thought. Critical social theory can be found in a broad range of social work approaches, such as anti-racist, anti-oppressive social work, feminist social work, various strands of community work, radical social work, structural social work, participatory and action research. Broadly speaking, critical social theory promotes critical thinking.

Critical Social Work Practice

Critical social work practice is concerned with working in ways which further a society without domination, exploitation and oppression. It challenges domination in external structures, personal constructions and social relations. Critical social work practice recognises multiple and diverse constructions. It derives knowledge from empirical reality, self reflection, communication and dialogue. Integral to critical social work is a critique of positivism as a major ideology. Critical social work includes the possibility for progress - raising awareness about domination and possible social change. Critical social work practice recognises interactive and reflective ways of knowing (Fook 2002).

Critical Reflection

Ordinary reflection is looking back on our experience as a way of constructing knowledge about the world and ourselves. Critical reflection is the process of analysing and questioning our experience, practice and ideas and then challenging our own thinking. Critical reflection is designed to deconstruct knowledge and multiple constructions. Critical reflection involves thinking about one's own practice in a way that responds to changing contexts and challenges existing power relations and structures. It emphasises the importance of uncovering power relations and questioning dominant structures and relations. Critical reflection is an extension of critical thinking.

Critical Thinking

As Gibbons (2002) reminds us, social work is rarely involved in areas in which answers are black and white. Social workers deal with information, values and perspectives from diverse areas. Critical thinking aims to challenge our own and other people's values, beliefs and assumptions and ensure that there is rigor in the way we think about our work. Gibbons (2002) provides a useful summary of critical thinking and its application to social work:

- Critical thinking is more than a step-by-step problem-solving process;
- It applies reflective skills to concrete situations. It can only be learnt and refined through practice - through doing and reflecting on what we have done and why we did it that way;
- Critical thinking involves creative and lateral thinking as well as analytical thinking;
- It allows for shades of grey, strives for depth, acknowledges ambiguity, complexity versus black and white;
- It focuses on process versus content;
- Critical thinking encourages an holistic/integrated perspective rather than simple unidisciplinary/linear approaches;
- It values original/insightful thought versus 'second hand' thinking;
- It suspends closure/neat and packaged solutions rather than strives for closure;
- It is exploring and probing rather than being dogmatic or avoiding.

Critical thinking for social work challenges values, assumptions, beliefs underlying knowledge, theories, practice and research questions and makes judgments about the relevance and validity of information. It is the basis of good clinical decisions and is required for ethical reasoning. It is needed for practice in organisations if social workers are to retain their professional integrity in the face of pressure to become organisational apparatchiks. It is also fundamental to our defence against becoming agents of social control versus agents of social change.



READING REFLECTION 25

READ

Gibbons, J. (2002). *Critical thinking and social work practice*. University of Newcastle. http://www.aforts.com/colloques_ouvrages/colloques/actes/interventions/gibbons_jill.doc

REFLECT

- How comfortable would you feel about the possibility of your ideas, values and beliefs being questioned or challenged by a student?
- Think about experiences you have had when you were questioned or challenged about some aspect of your work. How did you react?
- What did you learn about yourself and about the process of learning itself?
- What strategies can you think of that would encourage critical thinking in a student?

EXERCISE

Ask a colleague if you can practise your skills facilitating critical thinking by having them discuss a work related topic with you. This could be an aspect of casework, project/research work, community development, an aspect of organisational culture, a report written by someone else, discussing a theory, journal or even examining a teaching tool. Allow at least 20 minutes for the exercise. Once a topic for discussion has been decided upon, use the statements that are listed below to guide the discussion. Try to cover as many of the statements as you can, using your own words. Remember that your

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purpose is to assist your colleague to think critically. Try not to become distracted by the content of what they are saying. Ask your colleague to:

1. Explain the goals and purpose of their chosen topic.
2. Identify what questions they would like to answer and/or what problems they want to solve in relation to the topic.
3. Identify what information has been gathered/organised that is relevant.
4. Tell you the meaning and significance of this information.
5. Demonstrate that they understand the concepts.
6. Identify assumptions in their thinking.
7. Consider implications and consequences of the way they are thinking.
8. Examine things from more than one point of view.
9. State what they say a bit more clearly.
10. Test and check for accuracy in what they say.
11. Focus on their questions, issues, or problems.
12. Deal with complexities in problems and issues.
13. Consider the point of view of others.
14. Express their thinking logically.
15. Distinguish significant matters from insignificant ones.

Ask your colleague for feedback about the exercise itself and think about how you might adapt it for use with a student. You could also carry out the exercise with a colleague over the phone or online.



FURTHER READING

For some useful readings and practical resources about critical reflection and critical thinking, go to:

- <http://mcgraw-hill.co.uk/openup/fook&gardner/>
- <http://www.criticalthinking.org>

INTEGRATING THEORY AND PRACTICE

Assisting students to understand theory and to develop skills in linking theory to practice will support the development of critical thinking and analytical skills. To do this you'll need a level of confidence about theory. However, as we know, many social workers are anxious about theory. In their study of new graduates and experienced social workers in Australia, Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000) found that there was a minimal reported use of formalised theory amongst social work practitioners. They also found that social workers were conscious of the struggle to consciously use theory in practice, either because they were afraid of losing it or because some situations reminded them of the need for having a clear theoretical framework, which they didn't think they had.

In our experience, field educators and task supervisors sometimes think that they don't use theory in their practice; that they have forgotten the theories they once knew; that a student will know more than they do; that theory and practice are separate entities or perhaps that they just don't have the time to consider their own or their organisation's theory base. However, as a field educator it is not difficult to become more aware of how much you are using theory on a day-to-day basis and the sorts of theories you might be using.

It is useful to clarify what we mean by theories. A theory is something that:

1. Tells us what we see, and what to look for;
 2. Describes a situation using concepts and frameworks;
 3. Explains how the situation came about;
 4. Predicts what is likely to happen next;
 5. Suggests how to intervene in a situation to create change.
- (Howe, 1987, cited in Cleak & Wilson, 2007).

When on placement, a student should aim to incorporate each of these characteristics into their understanding of what theories they might be using by:

- Describing the situation they are working with;
- Explaining why they think this came about;
- Predicting what might happen next, and
- Analysing how they can intervene to bring about change.

In doing so, a student will be drawing upon some form of theory. Your skills as a field educator can be used to assist students to become aware of and articulate this process.

As Fook (2002) explains, the relationship between theory and practice is complex, intermingled and not a straightforward one. It is not surprising that people find this a confusing area. There are many different kinds of theories, practices and ways of theorising and making sense of our practice. Theories can be a single idea or a set of inter-related concepts. Likewise, our practice can be understood as a holistic experience or a set of techniques. Theories can be embedded in practice, modified in line with our practice or created to fit with practice.

Here are some techniques that facilitate learning about the relationship between theory and practice:

- A student observes the field educator (and other workers) putting theory into practice through their assessments, followed by discussion and reflection exercises;
- A student develops a toolkit of theories, which includes a description of each theory, its potential application in the organisation and/or an example of its application by the student;
- Undertaking a case analysis, using the questions provided for critical thinking and critical reflection;
- Use of a student's journal and reflective log to identify key learning related to their assumptions, beliefs, values and subsequent behaviour;
- A student uses supervision to teach the field educator about a theory they are not familiar with, or a theory that the student likes or feels comfortable with.



READING REFLECTION 26

READ

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Linking learning and practice in placement. Chapter 9. *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). (pp.90-97). Australia: Thomson.

REFLECT

As you work your way through this chapter, identify which theories are most often used in your workplace and which theories you find most useful in your own practice.

Which theories will you be encouraging a student to find out about during a placement in your organisation?

DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES

As we know, the ability to develop self-awareness is a starting point for all social work students. It is also an ongoing process, which is integral to effective practice as social workers and social work educators. Increased awareness of our emotions, the ability to accurately self-assess, and our capacity to develop and maintain self-confidence will have positive benefits for us and for our students.

Self-awareness is an integral part of emotional intelligence, which “is a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Mayer & Salovey, 1993: 433). Although there is a diversity of opinion about the scientific viability of emotional intelligence, particularly since Goleman popularised it in 1995, many writers argue that it provides the basis for competencies that are important in most jobs. Beddoe and Maidment (2009) highlight the value of teaching students to develop emotional intelligence skills and attributes in field education. They cite the work of Cherniss, who includes five core areas of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, social awareness and social skills. Beddoe and Maidment explain the importance of emotional intelligence for field education:

‘Emotional intelligence is more concerned with growth in personal insight... this type of learning requires students to examine deeply held values and beliefs; to become aware of the impact of their values and subsequent behaviour may have on others, both in social and in work situations; and to accurately perceive, understand and regulate the emotions of themselves and others’ (Beddoe & Maidment, 2009: 33).



DEVELOPING RESILIENCE

Burnout in social work has both a structural and a personal component. Conditions for burnout are created by work structures and professional cultures of 'coping'. Some social workers may have an inability to say no, or a reluctance to ask for something for themselves and it is important to examine your personal 'armour' against burnout. Social work students and field educators alike need to develop skills for preventing and 'curing' burnout, at a personal as well as a structural, political level.

The notion of resilience, which comes from the field of psychology, is also used in social work as a strategy for coping. As Collins (2007) states, 'resilience is an adaptive state and personality trait evident in many people, including social workers, but it is influenced by many variables, such as culture' (2007: 255). Positive emotions amidst negative events for example, are considered to be important elements in the psychological resilience of, and coping by, social workers. Three kinds of coping are identified: positive appraisal, goal-directed/problem-focused work and the infusion of ordinary events with meaning.

Factors that contribute to personal resilience include:

- Having caring and supportive relationships that create love and trust, provide role models, and offer encouragement and reassurance that help to bolster a person's resilience;
- The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out;
- A positive view of oneself and confidence in your strengths and abilities;
- Communication and problem solving skills;
- The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses.

Source: American Psychological Association. (2007). *The Road to Resilience*. Retrieved from APA Help Center. <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx>



READING REFLECTION 27

REFLECT

- Think of a time either as a practitioner or a past student on placement when you have used reflection to challenge your own assumptions and behaviour.
- What prompted you to do this and what facilitated this process?

Consider the following list of descriptions of reflection and reflexive practice and think about how you engage a student in these activities.

- Learning from experiences where the learner is directly involved in the process;
- A process of deconstructing and reconstructing around different paradigms;
- The development of enquiry and investigation;
- Examining differences in the way events are understood and exploring our assumptions;
- Revisiting events and/or mistakes;
- An opportunity for the field educator and student to “stand outside ourselves”;
- Using the skills of: discussion, debate, tactful challenge, analysis, feed back, discernment and observation;
- Making use of tools such as case studies, diaries, journals, videos, process and other recordings and reflective exercises such as the critical incident.

In their article, ‘Reflective Analysis: Techniques for facilitating reflection’, Osmond and Darlington (2005) describe a range of techniques for facilitating reflective critical analysis as a means of in-depth reflections on practice:

>>

- **Reflective questions and prompts** How does what happened compare with what I intended? How does it fit with the theory I thought I was using?
- **Case analysis questions** Tell me about the case? How do you think the person understood/felt about the situation? How did you understand/feel about it?
- **Exploring differences** How would your understanding/explanation have differed if the situation had been different? For example, if it had been a different location, different relationships between people, a different culture?
- **Before and after questions and prompts** What are your thoughts before seeing a client? What are your thoughts after seeing a client?
- **Think aloud, observation and reflective recall** Students are asked to verbalise all their thoughts while solving a problem. Field educators observe students and note down observations. Students at work are recorded and this is used as a stimulus for discussion.
- **Knowledge mapping** Students are asked to describe a client problem or issue of focus. This is recorded by the field educator as an external map, which is then used to stimulate reflection on the forms of knowledge a student has been using.

READ

Osmond, J., & Darlington, Y. (2005). Reflective Analysis: Techniques for facilitating reflection, *Australian Social Work*, 58(1). This article helps us to more fully understand how each technique works.

Next, look at Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Teaching and Learning Tools. *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). (pp.73-89). Australia: Thomson.

and

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Critical reflection for teaching and learning. *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). (pp.49-54). Australia: Thomson.

These chapters describe a range of teaching and learning tools, including the critical incident and techniques for enhancing reflection in supervision sessions.

Copy the questions that are listed about critical incidents and add this to your toolbox of techniques for facilitating reflection.

Other useful questions that prompt critical thinking can be found in: Beddoe, L., & Maidment, J. (2009). *Mapping Knowledge for Social Work Practice: Critical Intersections* (p 32). South Melbourne: Cengage Learning Australia.

EXERCISE

- Ask a colleague to choose a case or situation that they would be happy to reflect on in more depth with you. Select one of the techniques in the suggested reading in Reading Reflection 26 and apply it to your work with your colleague. This is an excellent way to develop skills in facilitating critical analysis.

DEVELOPING CRITICALLY REFLEXIVE PRACTICE

The concepts of reflexivity and reflective practice are often confused or taken as meaning the same thing. As Fook (2002) explains, reflexivity comes from the work of writers such as Argyris and Schon, who describe it as the process and value of reflecting on one's practice. Reflexivity, which comes from social science research, refers to one's ability to locate oneself in the picture and appreciate one's own self influences in, for example, the research process.

Critically reflexive practice describes a process of thinking that is purposeful, reasoned, and goal directed. It also implies an ability to evaluate thought processes - to understand the factors that contribute to making decisions. However, in addition to being a rational, cognitive activity, emotional aspects such as feelings, emotional responses, and intuitions are central to critical thinking.

The central task in the critical thinking process is to challenge the underlying values and beliefs or our assumptions and our behaviour. Through a process of critical reflection, we consider these implicit beliefs and values before accepting an idea or an event. Frequently that event has aroused a strong feeling - anxiety, fear, pain, exhilaration or happiness - which leads us to question our previously held ideas (Fook, 2002).

SUPERVISION SESSIONS

It is useful to make a consistent time for supervision sessions to assist a student in creating a routine for their week. It also indicates to a student that supervision is being made a priority.

Supervision sessions should be planned and purposeful. Set an agenda and prepare any material that will be used in advance. Cleak and Wilson (2007, p 65) offer the following questions as a guide to assist in setting an agenda for a session:

- Why is the meeting important?
- What is its purpose?
- What would you like to cover?
- What are your desired outcomes?
- What questions do you wish to ask?



READING REFLECTION 28

READ

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Developing good supervisory practices. *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). (pp.55-72). Australia: Thomson.

Giles, R., Irwin, J., Lynch, D., & Waugh, F. (2010). Guiding, Mentoring, Coaching and Supervising in an Organisational Environment. *In the Field: From Learning to Practice*. (p88-109). Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

REFLECT

What suggestions about structuring and recording supervision sessions would you use with students? Note Cleak and Wilson's discussion of the different types of supervision and the relationship between these. Which could be used in your workplace?

USING TECHNOLOGY

Thanks to MySpace, Facebook and other social networking sites, current students think that autobiography can happen in real time. Virtual reality has always been available for current students when the real thing failed. Avatars have nothing to do with Hindu deities. Current students are wireless, yet always connected. Current students grew up with and have outgrown faxing as a means of communication. Current students have rarely mailed anything using a stamp. Being techno-savvy has always been inversely proportional to age. Current students may have fallen asleep playing with their Gameboys in the crib. Libraries have always been the best centers for computer technology and access to good software.

(Marshall.L. Smith: http://www.socialworker.com/home/Feature_Articles/Technology/Electronic_Connection%3A_Teach_Your_Teachers/)



READING REFLECTION 29

REFLECT

- How does reading Smith's commentary make you feel?
- What does this say to you about your attitude to technology and its role in teaching and learning?

Online and other technologies are now commonly used as educational tools in social work education. As a field educator, you will want to familiarise yourself with the types of technology and online activities that students engage in, and what and how each one contributes to learning. For example, many universities use specialised software or courseware, such as Blackboard and WebCT, to deliver course content, contain discussions, serve as assignment drop boxes, and gather course resources in one place.

Students on placement may be undertaking a range of online learning activities related to their placement, such as integrative seminars. However, as Smith argues, there are also many stand alone tools and emerging technology which students use that aren't yet integrated into social work courses. For example:

- Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/>)
- MySpace (<http://www.myspace.com/>)
- SecondLife (<http://www.secondlife.com/>)
- Online surveys (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/>)
- Simulations and games (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simulation_game)
- Google Docs (<http://docs.google.com>)
- Google Apps (<http://www.google.com/a/>)
- Open source software and free internet tools
- Emerging technology, such as the Ipod, Iphone, interactive games and webinars.



READING REFLECTION 30

EXERCISE

Visit On Line Social Worker and browse through a series of short articles about the use of technology and social work:

http://www.socialworker.com/home/Feature_Articles/Technology/

In particular, read Smith's article called Electronic Connection:

Teach your Teachers.

REFLECT

- Your own experience using different technology, your degree of comfort with one technology over another and the resources that are available to you will influence the extent to which you are able to incorporate the use of technology into supervision with a student. Students also vary in their experiences with and preferences for different technology. Generally speaking, the younger a student, the more experienced and confident they will be using modern technologies.
- How do you feel about working with a student who is more proficient than yourself in using technology? What strategies might you use to overcome differences in knowledge and experience?
- Does your organisation make use of particular tools that could be adapted and used for supervision?
- How could you integrate a tool such as Facebook, which your student might use on a regular basis into supervision?
- How can you make use of online learning from online technology in supervision?

Maidment (2006) and others (Bushfield, 2005; Roberts-DeGennaro et al, 2005) describe how the online environment can be used by students during placement for additional support, advice and information, and provide opportunities for debriefing, peer support, reflection and feedback, networking and learning how to interact in a technologically-driven practice environment. In particular, technology is useful for field educators and students working in rurally isolated locations that have less opportunity to share their experience.

Maidment's article describes the use of asynchronistic discussion during the course of a student's placement. Look carefully at the examples that are provided and the way Maidment derives meaning from the postings made by students at different stages of a placement.

EVALUATION, ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

One of the most important and difficult role changes when moving from practitioner to field educator is having to evaluate students. No matter what strategies and support structures are in place, some students and field educators dread the thought of evaluation and postpone it as long as possible, avoiding discussing 'difficult' areas until the last moment. No one wants to 'disturb the cosy relationship' and we acknowledge how hard it can be to tread the balance between creating a warm and trusting environment for the student, within the framework of a learning situation. Raphael and Rosenblum (1987: 59) have summarised this problem for social workers thus:

In sum, the dread of evaluation at any point in time, the fear of harming the hard won student-field instructor alliance, the desire to be sensitive to students maturational needs, the hesitancy to make a professional judgement for fear of being judgemental, and the physical separation of the practicum from the school of social work, which complicates communication, are all formidable obstacles to readily making early assessments. Nevertheless, these obstacles must be surmounted.

How can we address such obstacles? Let's start by clarifying what is meant by evaluation, assessment and feedback.

Evaluation

Evaluation of student learning refers to an on-going process of making judgments about the value or worth of a student's learning. It is a collaborative process between the student, field educator, task supervisor (if applicable) and university liaison visitor, which is built into the entire placement and starts from the

beginning of a student's placement. Its success depends on open and informed dialogue between all parties, based on the objectives agreed upon in the Education Plan and a clear understanding of how decisions related to assessing a student's performance are going to be made. As Cleak and Wilson (2007) point out, before a student can be evaluated, what is good practice and how it is measured must be decided on and agreed to.

Specifically, judgments are made in relation to:

- Objectives and criteria that have been developed and documented in a student's Education Plan (which is discussed later in this section);
- The AASW Practice Standards, that are linked to the Education Plan.

Gathering evidence and recording observations that relate to the agreed upon criteria is paramount to providing detailed and specific feedback and to providing accountable and factual evaluation.

What type of documentation of evidence is available to field educators? Look at the following examples from Flinders University teaching materials (1997):

- Process recording
- Video and audio recording
- Case studies
- Critical incidents
- Journals
- Personal reflections
- Progress reports of projects or programs
- Client and co-worker feedback
- Peer review
- Ethical dilemmas
- Problem-solving sessions
- Critical reflections
- Written documentation of observation of student's work by field educator and/or a co-worker

There may be other examples that are specific to your own organisation. For all documentation types, it is important that the following questions are asked: How familiar are you with the examples? How comfortable do you feel about using them to gather evidence about a student's learning?

Note that evaluation is also needed for field educators' practice. Cleak and Wilson (2007) address this aspect of evaluation on pp.,178-183. Evaluation of your supervisory practice is part of critically reflective practice. Many field educators

find evaluating their own practice with students a useful way of modeling good reflective practice.

Assessment

Assessment is a part of evaluation that specifically refers to assessment type activities, such as the mid and final placement assessments. The term 'assessment' includes any activity that a student undertakes where there is an agreement that an assessment will be made about learning and performance in relation to the specified activity. Most universities require that by mid-placement, students should have a clear idea of whether they are making satisfactory progress, and if not, what has to be done to remedy the situation. The Education Plan is often changed at mid-placement to incorporate new objectives developed during the mid-placement assessment process.

If all goes well during placement, mid-placement and end of placement reports should hold no surprises, and should represent mutual agreement by all the parties. At the end of the placement, assessment decisions are made collaboratively about whether the student has reached the required minimum standards of competence. The field educator makes a recommendation to the University in consultation with the student and the university liaison visitor. If there is doubt about a placement result, each university will have its own procedures to follow. This often involves a Review Meeting with all parties to discuss a student's progress on placement, after which the university will make a decision about the final result.

Examples of assessment activities other than the mid-placement and final placement include:

- Presentations;
- Completion of a project or part of a project, such as a literature review;
- Carrying out a program evaluation;
- Carrying out a specific activity, such as running a workshop.

It is important that you are familiar with the marking requirements and expectations of the university prior to the student's arrival. Universities vary in relation to the assessment tasks that students are required to perform in order to successfully complete a placement. For example, some universities may require evidence of some or all of the following:

- a learning journal;
- a safety audit;
- a field education contract;
- an education plan;
- a student portfolio of placement work;

- a process report;
- a case analysis;
- a critical incident report;
- a reflective essay;
- mid-placement and final placement assessment report.



READING REFLECTION 31

READ

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Assessment and evaluation: students and supervisors. *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). (pp.174-184). Australia: Thomson.

Giles, R., Irwin, J., Lynch, D., & Waugh, F. (2010). Evaluation and Assessment: Facing the Challenges. *In the Field: From Learning to Practice* (pp. 124-142). Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Feedback

Feedback provides objective information and insight about a student's actual performance and how it relates to performance expectations, as well as the consequences of actions. It points the student in the direction of improving professional practice and achieving goals, and it encourages reflective and self-evaluative practice.

Field educators play an important role in providing students with regular, constructive, detailed feedback and in encouraging active reflective practices. Feedback gives the student greater insight into what they have actually done to arrive at an outcome, as well as information about their strengths and areas for improvement. Feedback should pay attention not only to the student's demonstration of knowledge and skills, but also to attitudes and feelings associated with what they are doing.

A climate of trust and respect must be established for a student to receive feedback positively. The Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative (2007) provides a useful checklist for ensuring that feedback is provided in a way that is constructive to a student's learning and practice development. When providing feedback to students, consider how well your intended feedback

constructively reflects the following characteristics:

- Individualised and relevant
- Goal-directed
- Well timed and expected
- Behaviour-focused
- Positive and encouraging
- Collaborative
- Change focused (non-evaluative)
- Factual (not generalised)
- Digestible
- Respectful
- Reciprocal
- A verification of perceptions
- Documented
- Followed up on at a later date

Source: Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative. (2007). *The Clinical Educator's Resource Kit: The Feedback Process* (see it online at <http://www.qotfc.edu.au/resource/index.html?page=65380>)
© 2007 Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative.



READING REFLECTION 32

READ

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Teaching and Learning Tools. *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). (pp.73-89). Australia: Thomson.

For a detailed description of the characteristics of constructive feedback, download this online document: Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative. (2007). *The Clinical Educator's Resource Kit: Fact Sheet 4.1 - Characteristics of Constructive Feedback*. Retrieved from: http://www.qotfc.edu.au/resource/documents/fact_sheet_4_1.pdf.

>>

REFLECT

- Think of a time when you gave someone at work some feedback. Which of the characteristics of constructive feedback that are listed were reflected in your feedback?
- What might prevent you from giving a student constructive feedback?

Cleak and Wilson discuss the role and importance of feedback during supervision and provide some guidelines for giving feedback during supervision. Copy Cleak and Wilson's nine points about feedback. Think about the best way to monitor feedback during supervision.

As Cleak and Wilson state (2007), ongoing evaluation processes should be linked to the assessment events. These typically occur mid-placement and at the end of placement. All universities provide field educators and students with information about how to approach these events and the university requirements for each. We discuss these in Section 4 of this booklet. It is important that you familiarise yourself with these requirements and if possible, make use of any seminars and workshops that are offered by the university during the course of a student's placement.

Finally, read Cleak and Wilson's description of the sorts of difficulties experienced by field educators when a student has not met the assessment criteria for a placement, including their suggested strategies to address this. These strategies will assist you should you find yourself in this situation with a student. Having said this, it is likely that you will spend a lot of additional time working with both student and liaison visitor if a student is struggling with their placement. When a student fails a placement it is often very stressful not just for the student involved but for field educators and their organisations. This can be the case no matter how sensitively and constructively the situation has been managed. Therefore, we would urge you to look closely at what support structures you have in place throughout the process of a placement.

EXERCISE

- Write down any concerns you still have about assessing a student's performance and any thoughts you have in the unlikely event of failing a student.



FURTHER READING

- Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Ed.). Australia: Thomson.
- Beddoe, L., & Maidment, J. (2009). *Mapping Knowledge for Social Work Practice: Critical Intersections*, Chapter 3: Developing Professional Practice Skills. Australia: Cengage Learning.
- Davys, A., & Beddoe, L. (2009). *The Reflective Learning Model: Supervision of Social Work Students*. Waikato Institute of Technology New Zealand, University of Auckland: New Zealand.
- Osmond, J., & Darlington, Y. (2005). Reflective Analysis: Techniques for facilitating reflection, *Australian Social Work*. March 2005, Vol 58, No 1.



Working with difficulties

There is plenty of opportunity for challenges and difficulties to emerge during field education. Difficulties if handled well can be some of the most valuable learning experiences. Handling difficulties well requires high levels of skill. While difficulties can be experienced on both sides of the supervision relationship, this segment focuses mainly on strategies for field educators to deal with difficulties that students face.

Whenever a student's performance, behaviour or health is affecting their ability to meet the placement learning objectives and competencies required of them, it is important to address the concerns as soon as they become obvious. The following steps are based on useful suggestions from the Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative:

1. Identify and explore the problem as early as possible

Although alerting a student to problems will most likely increase their anxiety about the possibility of failing their placement, it is essential that problems be identified throughout the course of a placement so that there are no surprises for a student. Sometimes this requires a field educator to balance being compassionate with making tough decisions and judgements, based on clear goals and evidence.

2. Provide timely and factual feedback

Refer back to the earlier part of this section which covered the topic of feedback. Clear, timely, factual and constructive feedback is critical when a student is experiencing difficulties. Be aware that in these circumstances, students can easily interpret all feedback as negative.

3. Be supportive

- Engage in active listening;
- Organise counselling and support as needed. As previously mentioned, it is not appropriate for you to provide personal counselling for a student. If a student requires counselling, contact the university liaison visitor and/or make a referral to another professional;
- Students who are experiencing difficulties often seek support and advice from other people in the organisation rather than the field educator. Sometimes this can be confronting for field educators, particularly if a student is blaming a field educator for the difficulties they are having. Although this is not a common occurrence, it is useful to take some time to consider how you would feel and respond in the event of this happening. What impact (if any) might this have on your organisation? Could you continue to support a student under these circumstances?

4. Develop a strategy

- Review and establish new opportunities for the student to practice inadequately developed skills/competencies. Don't hesitate to do this in conjunction with the University liaison visitor, who may be able to offer suggestions for alternative strategies. Brainstorm all solutions and try to keep strategies and outcome measures concrete;
- Modify your approach. Consider the student's preferred learning style. For example: Would further demonstration or more step-by-step instructions be helpful? Should you use a whiteboard? Does the student need time to reflect on possible solutions to the problem?;

- Modify the planned learning experiences to promote confidence and increased competence;
- Monitor student's implementation of the strategy and designate a review and evaluation date.

5. Maintain confidentiality

Students' progress and performance should only be discussed with the necessary people in the setting and/or at the university (normally field education staff).

6. Document the process

Include all important observations, discussions and decisions.

7. Seek support

If problems cannot be resolved, the university liaison visitor will offer active assistance, mediation and support and negotiate with you to visit again or phone the student to provide additional assistance.

8. Review and evaluate outcomes

Ensure dates for both review and final evaluation are agreed with the student:

- Look for change in performance and allow a student the opportunity to demonstrate change in performance;
- Gain feedback from other staff regarding performance;
- Provide feedback when change or no change in performance is noted;
- Review and/or modify strategy and implement strategy; and
- Evaluate performance and assign a grade.

Source: Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative - *Managing Student Concerns* (www.qotfc.edu.au/resource/index.html?page=65385).

Cleak and Wilson (2007) provide some similar strategies to these eight steps. The authors also describe some of the reasons why it is difficult for field educators to fail a student. These include:

- Being aware of all the consequences (academic, financial and personal) for a student;
- Having developed a closeness and rapport with a student;
- A lack of confidence to assess a student in the absence of reliable and useful criteria for evaluation;
- Fear that one's judgement might be biased;

- Difficulty describing the basis for a student's difficulties;
- Difficulty pinpointing evidence to back up concerns;
- A lack of support from agency and colleagues;
- Concern that a student's failure will reflect on one's teaching abilities;
- Fear about how a student might react to failing;
- Difficulty imposing one's professional standards and values on a student;
- Concern about being judged negatively by others.



READING REFLECTION 33

REFLECT

- What other reasons might make you reluctant to recommend an unsatisfactory result for a student?
- The experience of failure can create conflict and intense, mixed emotions. Think back to a time when either you or someone you know failed something that was very important.
- What emotions were you aware of at the time and afterwards?
- Was there any conflict and how was it managed?
- What assisted you to handle the situation?
- What did you learn from the experience that could assist you as a field educator?

READ

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Challenging Issues in Supervision. *Making the Most of Field Placement* (2nd Edn.) (pp.140-149). Australia: Thomson.



TYPES OF DIFFICULTIES

As we can see from the range of indicators, the types of difficulties or problems experienced by students vary considerably. Similarly, there are different causes or sources of a problem. Look at the table below and think about some of the different types of difficulties and their possible causes. You could add your own suggestions to this list.

DIFFICULTY	POSSIBLE CAUSE
Emotional problems are interfering with a student's capacity to undertake the placement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing personal problem unrelated to placement • Emotional problem develops during the placement
A student struggles with the organisational context of the placement, such as the setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural difference • Lack of understanding of setting • Inappropriate match • Setting too complex for student
A student's learning style is unsuited to the placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mismatch between student, field educator and agency • Student is incapable of adopting a different learning style
A student is unable to make progress linking theory and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student lacks intellectual capacity • Lack of opportunities for learning at agency
A student experiences a high degree of anxiety and/or stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety is unrelated to placement (student is already anxious due to outside stressors) • Anxiety is largely related to the placement experience • Stress is related to university and other work commitments • Lack of positive feedback on placement • Fear of failure • Cultural differences • Poor physical and/or mental health • Negative experience in previous placement

Poor communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of self awareness/understanding • Lack of experience • Cultural differences • Lacks empathy or sensitivity • Slow learner • Not suited to social work
Poor work administration and administrative skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks experience • Lacks motivation • Unclear expectations • No role model/never learnt work skills
Can't identify self learning and development; lacks self awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not suited to social work • Immature • Lacks confidence
Cultural conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different cultural background and experience • Lacks cultural awareness • Different values and beliefs • Not suited to social work
Lacks self direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immature • Lacks experience • Unclear expectations
A student's disability is not acknowledged and is mistaken for something else	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge and/or understanding
Student field educator conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in theoretical orientation and beliefs about effective intervention • Difficulty dealing with authority • Conflict related to a clash with field educator's style. • Poor communication skills • Lack of confidence • Lack of self awareness

As you can see, sometimes the cause of a problem lies not in the student's professional competence, but in differences of perspective, values, learning styles; or being at a different developmental learning stage from the field educator.



READING REFLECTION 34

CASE EXAMPLE

Gaining an understanding of what is causing a problem is an important step in determining how a problem might be tackled. Anxiety is one of the most common difficulties experienced by social work students on placement, which can significantly interfere with learning, as you will see in the below example.

Juliette has been on placement for over three weeks. She is highly anxious and comes across as timid and nervous most of the time. As a result, she lacks authority and doesn't inspire confidence in others. From everyone's perspective, including Juliette's, she is not ready to work with clients. Fellow workers have also commented that they find her difficult to work with because she is so anxious. Juliette acknowledges that she is anxious but she is not able to identify strategies that might help her or her field educator reduce her anxiety so that she can make progress with her learning.

Write down your thoughts in response to the following questions:

- What might be causing Juliette's anxiety?
- Where would you start as a field educator?
- What support/resources might assist you?

A useful place to begin is to look at all the possible causes that as a field educator, you might directly or indirectly play a part in, and develop new strategies to address them. For example, you would start by ensuring that each supervision session begins with positive feedback about Juliette's strengths, before exploring the difficulties she is experiencing. This way, you can be sure that a lack of positive feedback is not causing or exacerbating Juliette's anxiety.

If Juliette's anxiety persists, you might then explore other possible causes related to the placement. For example, is the work she is expected to undertake suitably matched to her level of knowledge and skills? Are the learning opportunities that are available to her suited to her learning style? Is something about her own cultural background making it difficult for her to adjust to the agency environment? You would explore these possibilities with Juliette as much as possible and, if appropriate, develop and implement

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different strategies to address the possible causes. If Juliette's anxiety continued (and was still interfering with her learning) you could then assume that there was an underlying cause, which was unrelated to the placement. You would need to develop a new strategy, which might involve seeking assistance from the university liaison visitor. By this stage you might be considering whether there was value in continuing the placement.

READ

Read the case studies of common difficulties that are provided by Cleak & Wilson (2007) in Chapter 13: 'Challenging Issues In Supervision'.

REFLECT

- How confident do you feel about addressing any difficulties (including anxiety such as that described in the case example) that have been identified?
- Are some difficulties easier for you to address than others? Why?
- What strategies have you used in the past, which could be adapted to address problems or difficulties that might develop for a student during the course of their placement?

INDICATORS OF DIFFICULTIES

There is a range of literature from social work, education and the field of allied health, which describes early warning signs and characteristics shown by students who are having problems that interfere with their learning and progress on placement.

Charles Sturt University's (2010) adaptation of Raphael and Rosenblum's early warning signs provides us with a useful set of personal, interpersonal and educational characteristics:

Personal:

- Persistent high anxiety;
- Extreme immaturity;
- Extreme passivity;
- Superficiality;

- Inability to separate own problems from clients’;
- Inappropriate behaviours, emotional outbursts;
- Inappropriate dress;
- Lack of punctuality;
- Unethical conduct.

Interpersonal:

- Detachment from or over-identification with clients;
- Problems relating to peers;
- Problems relating to agency staff;
- Poor phone manner;
- Poor communication skills.

Educational:

- Inability to examine own behaviour;
- Avoidance of having own practice observed;
- Inability to accept/provide constructive feedback;
- Inability to reflect on learning, identify learning opportunities;
- Poor use of supervision;
- Poor literacy skills, problems in recording, report writing etc.

Deficiencies in handling assigned tasks:

- Problems carrying out specific, concrete activities assigned by the supervisor early in placement;
- Refusal/inability to follow instructions.

Other general indicators, which are adapted from Maloney, Carmody & Nemeth, (1997) by the Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative (www.qotfc.edu.au) include:

- inconsistent levels of performance and competence;
- a lack of insight and/or an inability to focus on what is important;
- an inability to develop deeper levels of knowledge and understanding and/or engage in critical reflection;
- an inability to develop a professional attitude;
- a risk of failing one or more core learning objectives;
- an inability to integrate knowledge, skills and attitudes;
- limited interaction (and communication skills) with clients and/or co-workers;
- a lack of interest, motivation and/or initiative;
- inadequate preparation, organisational and prioritisation skills;
- an inability to complete assigned tasks;
- difficulties with emotions;
- not engaging in process of learning.

Another way of thinking about difficulties is provided by Cleak and Wilson (2007), who suggest using Megginson and Boydell's (1989) system of categorising difficulties into types of learning blocks, which interfere with progress. These include:

1. Perceptual - learners are not able to recognise the nature of the learning that is required;
2. Cultural - learners adhere to a rigid set of norms;
3. Emotional - a student's emotional state affects their ability to learn;
4. Intellectual - a student may lack the intellectual skills needed for a task.



READING REFLECTION 35

- Are there other indicators that you can think of which are not listed here?
- Are some indicators more important than others?
- Does intuition have a role to play and if so, in what way?



FURTHER READING

- Doel, M. (2010). The Going Gets Tough. In *Social Work Placements: A Traveller's Guide*. (pp. 140-177). London: Routledge.

This chapter offers insights into difficulties from a student's perspective, as well as reflections on what a field educator might do.





SECTION 4

Phases of student supervision

THE SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP IN FIELD EDUCATION

The supervisory relationship is the heart of field education.

(Beddoe, 2000)

For centuries poets and philosophers have sensed that the heart is the very centre of our lives. Throughout the ages, the heart has been referred to as a source not only of virtue but also of intelligence. Some current research on the heart suggests that every beat of the heart carries intricate messages that affect our emotions, physical health and the quality of life we experience. According to authors Childre and Martin (1994), research shows that the heart is an intelligence, complete with bio-chemicals, hormones and neurotransmitters, just like the brain. As we learn to become more heart intelligent and increase the emotional balance and heart/brain coherence in ourselves, we can increase mental clarity, productivity and energy and improve our overall attitude and quality of life.

How can we use our hearts to create the type of positive and meaningful relationship we would like to have with a student? An early study by Fortune and Abramson (1993) found that the quality of field instruction was made up of three inter-related components:

- An affective component that includes trust, support, openness and availability in the supervisory relationship;
- Involvement in active learning, including participation in designing experiences, independence and encouragement to express ideas;
- Conceptual input into student learning including critical feedback, connections with the next step in learning, and role modelling.

The students' perceptions of the quality of field instruction were themselves predicted by the presence of regular supervision, in-depth discussion of the student's learning needs, and making connections to theory. Attending to student's needs should be balanced by providing clear direction and constructive, critical feedback and students also require cognitive, didactic input that enables them to connect classroom activities and the field.

Fortune and Abramson provide a summary of the skills field educators need to create an appropriate adult learning environment for social work students. These include the ability to:

- Develop a supportive, open, but challenging relationship with the student;
- Engage the student as an active learner;
- Individualise within a structure that assures covering essential skills;
- Enable students to refine personal goals and match them to learning opportunities;
- Give constructive feedback;
- Help students with conceptual linkages (make explicit connections between case material and theory regularly).

In 2003, Giddings et al asked a randomly selected group of social workers to recall specific problems they had with field instruction that occurred during their placements. Although most students in the study experienced no problems with their field educators, a small but significant number experienced problems that generated stress and impacted them as professionals. Interestingly, the most common source of problems for students were a supervisory style that was seen as either too rigid or authoritarian with little sensitivity, or a supervisory style characterised by a lack of supervision.

Authoritative styles include:

Prescriptive - giving advice and explicit direction

Informative - imparting knowledge and information

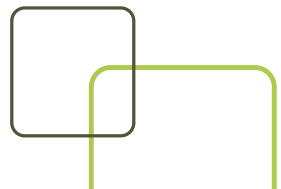
Confrontational - giving clear, direct feedback about behaviour and challenge beliefs and attitudes

Facilitative styles include:

Cathartic - enabling students to release tension and emotions

Reflective - encouraging reflection and self-direction

Supportive - confirming and validating student's values and worth



DEVELOPING THE SUPERVISION RELATIONSHIP

Beddoe (2000) identifies three developmental stages of the supervisory relationship that can assist field educators during the process of forming a relationship with a student.

These are:

- **Beginning phase - Construction.** This phase includes activities such as planning, building rapport, clarifying expectations and establishing boundaries
- **Middle phase - Consolidation.** This phase includes deepening trust, reviewing expectations, testing boundaries and when necessary, managing conflicts
- **Termination phase - Closure.** This phase includes evaluating the relationship, managing the emotional impact of assessment and termination, and critically reviewing learning.

According to Hawkins and Shohet (2000), developmental models of the supervision relationship are useful tools to:

- Help field educators and students realise that as the student develops, so must the nature of the supervision;
- Emphasise that one of the tasks of supervision is to help the student move between developmental phases;
- Help the field educator plan types of activities that will be most useful for students at different phases of practice (see below).

When using developmental models with students, take into account the following:

1. The uniqueness of the student-field educator relationship means that developmental phases may look and feel different with different individuals.
2. Field educators and students are passing through different stages of their own development and this also needs to be taken into account. In the social work supervision context, Gardiner's (1989) model does this very well.

3. It is important not to become responsible for another person's development and assume one always knows what is right for them at what time. Field education emphasises adult learning principles and assumes that the student is responsible for his/her own learning. Active participation by students is essential in planning what they will learn, when and how.

The three developmental stages identified by Gardiner (1989) and Hawkins & Shohet (2000) approximately correspond to the beginning, middle and ending phases of the field education relationship discussed below.

STAGE 1: CONTENT ORIENTATION

At this stage, students and field educators focus on the content of learning, and concrete ways of intervening in practice. The student is dependent on the field educator, and often there is the expectation of passive reproductive learning, with the field educator in authority telling the student what to do and how to go about it the 'right' way. This stage of learning is similar to the traditional apprenticeship models of supervision.

Often the student experiences high levels of anxiety at this early stage, with their focus being primarily on their own performance ('Can I do this?') and their client's situation ('Can I help this client?').

Students find it difficult to be at all reflective or see the overall process of practice, and need clearly structured tasks. Hawkins & Shohet (2000) quote research to show that students at this stage are most anxious about activities which encourage reflection or self-awareness (such as process recording, video-taping), and evaluation.

As the supervision relationship emerges from this first stage, the student may be dealing with 'adolescent' issues such as authority-testing within the relationship, and may fluctuate from being over-confident in practice to being overwhelmed by doubts about being able to cope and even questioning whether they are in the right job. Field educators at this point can be less structured in their content and take a less didactic approach to instruction, but need to be emotionally supportive as students oscillate between excitement and depression.

STAGE 2: PROCESS ORIENTATION

This stage entails a qualitative change in the supervision relationship. Students become less dependent on their field educators and less content oriented. They are more actively involved in the learning process, taking more responsibility for their own learning, and seeing a variety of ways to respond to a situation. They are developing the ability to be more flexible in their approach, seeing the problem in a wide context, and calling upon a range of approaches and skills.

Hawkins & Shohet (2000) describe this ability as having 'helicopter skills'. Gardiner (1989) refers to it as the shift from reproductive learning to constructive learning, or from 'surface' to 'deep' strategies. The supervision relationship becomes process-oriented ('How are we relating together?') as field educators recognise they do not have to always be the expert. Hawkins & Shohet identify affection and intimacy as being the major issues; how to become close and what is appropriate closeness.

This is the stage at which reflection develops. Hawkins and Shohet (2000) refer to it as the 'independent craftsman' stage when learning is incorporated into the personality. Gardiner argues that constructive or deep learning outcomes will be unlikely to develop in social work education if the supervision relationship does not reach this stage. Clearly, if our aim is to foster the growth of reflective abilities, it is important that students and field educators aim to at least reach this phase in the development of their supervision relationship.

STAGE 3: PROCESS IN CONTEXT ORIENTATION

In the ultimate stage of the supervision relationship, there is another qualitative shift in the type of reflective ability students and field educators use. The emphasis shifts from process-centred to process-in-context-centred, and the main focus becomes 'How do the processes interpenetrate?'

Gardiner (1989) describes this stage as being able to use and qualitatively evaluate different approaches for different learning tasks. Hawkins and Shohet (2000) refer to it as the 'master craftsman' stage, and make the analogy of the difference between knowledge and wisdom. They quote a Sufi teacher: 'Knowledge without wisdom is like an unlit candle'.

Gardiner argues that the ability to transfer learning developed at this stage, is at the heart of social work training. Students cannot possibly rehearse all the types of work and skill they will need in practice, because social work is so often dealing with the 'unfamiliar', thus social work students need to develop the skills of Stage 3.

Gardiner describes the twin processes involved at this level as being able to generalise from the particular and then apply these generalisations in new and different practice settings. One of our aims in our focus on integrating field education learning with learning in university subjects is to encourage Stage 3 learning to occur. Kolb (1984, 225-226) describes this ability as 'integrity': people who reach integrity or learning to learn can use all four learning styles creatively and flexibly. Similarly, Gardiner (1989) notes that those at Stage 3 have access to the processes described in the previous two phases and can use whichever is appropriate to the situation. Deciding what is 'sensible' or 'appropriate' of course, returns us to a question of values.

Kolb (1984, 227) writes:

...Integrity requires the thoughtful judgements as well as the scientific judgement of fact ...We need to develop, in the arena of articulation of values, inquiry methods that are as sophisticated and powerful as the methods of science have been in matters of fact.

At Stage 3 in the supervision relationship, the student takes the initiative in the supervision sessions and the field educator recognises the need for autonomy and diversity. At this level, students and field educators also demonstrate the ability to discriminate between different levels of communication.

Despite its importance in field education, Gardiner's research found few social work supervision relationships which had reached this level of interaction. No wonder so many workers in welfare experience stress and burnout, when so few are equipped with the conceptual ability to respond to the complexity that confronts them in practice. Kolb writes that people who are at Stage 3, experience less stress and conflict in their lives, along with added richness and complexity. Gardiner also writes about the possibilities for mismatches between students and supervisors at different phases of development.

These ideas for seeing both the supervision relationship and learning as developmental will help you negotiate the difficulties which often arise as two people attempt to work and learn together.





The beginning phase of field education

We will now explore what is involved in the three phases of field education - beginning, middle and end - starting with the beginning phase. This includes orientation for a student, issues in the beginning phase, professional behaviour and ethical expectations, developing education plans and the first liaison contact.

ORIENTATION FOR THE STUDENT

The first weeks of placement are crucial in the development of a teaching relationship with a student and for orienting a student to your organisation and its wider context. Thoughtful planning in the early phases can make a significant difference to a student's level of anxiety at the beginning of a placement, and your own confidence about being a field educator. Early planning will also assist you to establish structures and processes that are conducive to a positive field education experience.



READING REFLECTION 36

REFLECT

Think about the last time you started a new job, became part of an existing organisation or group, or when you started a social work placement.

- What was the experience like?
- How did you feel?
- How were you made to feel welcome? Who was involved in this?
- Was there an orientation program?
- What else could have been done to make the process an easier one for you?

EXERCISE

Draw up a checklist of everything you would like to provide for a student when they first arrive. This should include:

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- physical resources, such as a desk, phone, policy documents, etc;
- orientation activities, such as information about the organisation and how to find things;
- introductions to people, special welcome activities and participation in the organisation's orientation program for new staff (or students).

Once you have done this, ask your colleagues for suggestions to add to your list.

READ

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Getting started - Supervisor. *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). (pp. 31-38). Australia: Thomson.

Read the first few pages of Chapter 4 in Cleak and Wilson. The authors make an important distinction between general orientation and orientation that is specifically related to facilitating learning in the beginning phase of a student's placement, which can be addressed both informally and in supervision.

Orientation to the context, services, resources and structure of your organisation is integral to a student's learning in the beginning phase of placement. The chart that is presented below is a useful orientation tool that you could use with a student during the first few weeks of placement. Make a copy of this chart to give to a student. During supervision, you could discuss how he or she might undertake and report on each activity. This exercise would also be useful for gaining an initial impression of how a student approaches learning.

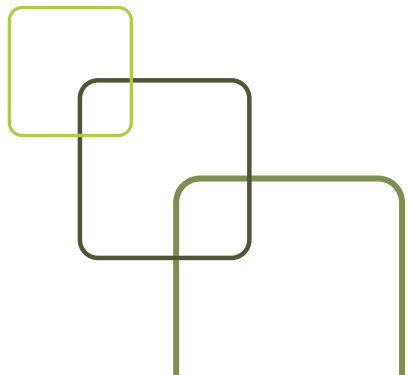


CHART 1: LEARNING ABOUT THE PLACEMENT ORGANISATION

1. History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did it begin, how, why?
2. Mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under what auspices? • What legislation affects its operation?
3. Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources, size of budget
4. Organisational goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are its purposes and objectives?
5. Organisational structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the power structure? • What are the different levels of decision-making?
6. Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many staff? Type of staff? • What positions do they hold? • What tasks do they perform? • What training or qualifications do they have? • What other criteria are used in their appointment? • What is the (approximate) social composition of the various groups at different levels? (e.g. social class, income, sex, age)
7. Operational policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What services does the organisation operate? • Where does the organisation's activity take place? (e.g. institution, community centre, private homes, etc.) • What policies govern the employees? • What policies govern the service to consumers?
8. Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What values are stated and what values are implicit in organisational policies?

<p>9. Service users</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who participates in or uses this organisation? • Approximately how many people? • What 'groups' or 'types of people'? (e.g. age, sex.) • Voluntarily - involuntary? • What access, if any, do they have to agency decision-making and policy formulation? • What (typically) is their length of contact with the organisation?
<p>10. Place of organisation in the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is its special contribution? • What official and unofficial links does it have with other organisations? • What other key organisations are concerned with the same social issues, or are offering similar services?

Source: Charles Sturt University. (2010). *Professional Field Education 1 & 2 CD* (adapted from Phillip Institute Department of Social Work. (1982). *Field Education Manual*.

DEVELOPING EDUCATION PLANS

The Education Plan, which is also referred to as the learning agreement, learning contract or learning plan, is a critical component of field education. It is used for setting a student's learning goals and objectives and for evaluating a student's learning placement. The Education Plan is intended to be a dynamic document, which can be changed and amended during the course of a placement. There are differences in the formats that are used by universities, although they all share common elements. More recently, a number of universities have developed formats that centre on learning that addresses the AASW Practice Standards for social workers. Each university has its own teaching activities and guidelines for students regarding how to develop their Education Plan and most universities provide briefing sessions for field educators on developing and using Education Plans. Contact your university for an example of an Education Plan.



The core elements of an Education Plan include:

- A statement of learning goals;
- Specific tasks related to goals;
- An indication of how (the methods) goals will be met;
- Evidence for meeting goals (how the student and field educator will know goals have been met);
- The relationship of goals to AASW Practice Standards.
(Charles Sturt University, 2010)

Field educators help students to develop Education Plans, which take into account the academic requirements of the university, the AASW Practice Standards, their own and their organisation's requirements, as well as the interests and abilities of the student. This can be a time consuming process, and many students find it a difficult task.



READING REFLECTION 37

REFLECT

- How could I best assist a student to develop the Education Plan?
- What resources would assist me with this?
- How much should I contribute to this activity?
- How could I ensure the process is creative and affirming for a student?

Rogers & Langevin (2000), cited in Cleak & Wilson (2007) describe four elements of learning that are necessary for human service practice. These are:

- Being: affective qualities, such as the ability to feel, value and empathise with others;
- Knowing: knowledge of the theories and concepts that guide practice;
- Doing: the skills and behaviours required to demonstrate an ability to practice;
- Thinking: cognitive abilities, such as reasoning, remembering, conceptualising and analysing in relation to problems and solutions.

>>

Using your own practice, identify and write down one new goal, under each of the four elements listed over the page, that you would like to work towards over the next six months. The goals need not be major or complex goals. For each one, write down the tasks that are involved, and how you intend to achieve the goal. Then, reflect on the four types of learning involved. Which are you most comfortable and familiar with?

READ

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Charting the course for placement – contracts and agreements. *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). (pp. 39-47). Australia: Thomson.

Giles, R., Irwin, J., Lynch, D., & Waugh, F. (2010). Beginning the Process of Learning in Context. *In the Field: From Learning to Practice*, (pp. 69-87). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press

EXERCISE

Make some notes on what have you learnt about education plans in this segment.

From the Cleak & Wilson reading, make a copy of Shardlow & Doel's useful seven-step approach for developing an Education Plan. You could use this with a student in supervision, as a guide for developing the Education Plan.

Make notes in your journal on the following:

- How can I best assist a student to develop the Education Plan?
- What resources will assist me with this?
- How much should I contribute to this activity?
- How can I ensure the process is creative and affirming for a student?

Charles Sturt University (2010) also provides some useful tips and examples for developing an Education Plan, which you could share with a student. The authors emphasise that learning objectives should be SMART:

- S - Specific
- M - Measurable
- A - Attainable
- R - Realistic
- T - Time-targeted

Ask a student to check each of their learning goals against the SMART criteria. Some examples of learning objectives, which you could share with a student, include:

- Demonstrates knowledge of group roles and identifies those roles;
- Identifies the advantages and disadvantages of a proposed staff training program;
- Interprets the relevant sections of education legislation to a parent regarding a child with special needs.

Learning activities are tasks undertaken to achieve learning objectives. Some examples are:

- Co-lead a group of recently separated women.
- Accompany a pupil to a hearing for special placement.
- Summarise a meeting of agency directors interested in developing programs for seniors.

Examples of evaluation statements, related to learning goals are:

- Presents a point-form summary of team-meeting dynamics over time.
- Articulates three practice theory models as they relate to social work in this agency.
- Completes needs analysis report, ready for presentation to the management committee.

OTHER PLANS

Where a placement involves a major project, a Project Plan may be needed as part of the Education Plan, or as a separate agreement. This type of plan is especially useful when there is more than one field educator, and can detail the specific task arrangements, and who is responsible for which part of the supervision of the project.

The RMIT *University Education Manual* contains a checklist describing the areas to be covered by Project Plans:

- Description of overall project and its purpose;
- Nature of activities, which are part of the overall project;
- Statement of how all work will be managed, i.e. timelines, person

- power, costs, resources available and needed, consultation (includes identifying who is responsible for these);
- Identification of constraints and statement of how these may be dealt with;
- Statement of how field educator and agency will monitor and evaluate progress;
- How and when the plan will be reviewed and modified and by whom.

The best way to write a Project Plan is to draw up a timeline, which specifies the points at which the tasks will be done (and by whom). With such a timeline on the wall, students and field educators can see at a glance where they are up to.

Similar plans may be needed for research projects. For students involved in university-based research, ethics approval may be required. Some universities require other types of agreements, such as a Supervision Agreement or Contract and Placement Contract, which outline the mutual obligations and expectations of the student, field educator and agency. All parties are usually required to sign such agreements. Cleak and Wilson (2007) provide good examples of these in *Making the Most of Field Placement* (2nd Edn.). (See Reading Reflection 37).

ISSUES IN THE BEGINNING PHASES OF FIELD EDUCATION

In the section in this Guide on Developing the Supervision Relationship (p. 87), we discussed how students need to focus on the content of what they have to learn/are expected to do in the beginning of the supervision relationship. That is why there is no point expecting reflection to develop too early in the supervision relationship. Students and field educators also have to negotiate many issues as they establish their supervision relationships.

It is important to be aware of the sorts of issues that can sometimes arise during the beginning phase of a student's placement. These relate to:

- Power differences between the field educator and student
- The expression of difference
- The need for structure, autonomy and (in) dependence
- The need for approval
- Self-awareness
- Transference and counter-transference, where assumptions and feelings developed in other, similar relationships are transferred into the supervision relationship.

In an interesting study of expression of differences in placement, Raphael & Rosenblum (1989) found that, as long as expression of difference received an empathic response from field educators, it strengthened both student practice and the student-field educator relationship. However, when the field educators gave a non-empathic response to student expression of difference, there was nearly always a negative effect on student practice and/or learning. Raphael and Rosenblum argue that field educators need to demonstrate the belief that differences are normal, healthy and useful in the education process.

Bogo and Vayda (1998) classify field educators into three distinct groups, which include:

- The directive group who feel most comfortable telling a student what to do step-by-step, and checking frequently on how they are following instructions;
- The group who prefer mutual goal setting through ongoing negotiation leading to consensus; and
- The least directive group who expects students to be able to articulate goals and initiate and plan the learning experience, using the field educator as a consultant when needed.



READING REFLECTION 38

REFLECT

- Which of Bogo and Vayda's group do you identify with the most?
- How might you negotiate with a student if there are clear differences between you?
- What other issues might emerge in the beginning phase, which might require attention early on?

CASE EXAMPLE

Read the following case example, which illustrates some of the issues we have been discussing.

>>

Prior to entering a social work degree program, Jim G. had worked for four years in the welfare department as a caseworker. In his final year he had contracted to do his placement in a family-oriented agency. He had contracted with Sally F., his field instructor, for 'direct supervision' where the instructor would participate in the interview sessions with him and intervene in his work with the client system as she thought appropriate. They would discuss the case process and their interventions after the session. As they were entering the interview room for the third family session, Jim turned to Sally and said, 'Would you please just observe today? Let me carry the session myself.' Sally was very surprised and said to Jim in an irritated tone, 'Well, in that case, you don't need me in the room. Just tape the interview and I'll see you at our next meeting.' She noticed he looked uncomfortable, as if he wanted to respond. She turned her back and went to her office.

Sally sat in her office and thought about what had just happened. She identified that she was feeling angry and rejected by Jim's sudden breaking of their agreement that she would participate in the interviews. She asked herself what it was that she was so angry about. She had tried to be a 'good' field instructor, sensitive to the student's need for control as an experienced worker. She had developed an approach to field instruction that emphasised mutuality and participation. In his rejection of this approach, she felt 'unappreciated' and devalued. She acknowledged that feeling appreciated was important to her in interpersonal relationships. She began to speculate about Jim's possible reasons for not wanting her in that session.

She drew on her knowledge that all behaviour has meaning and is the product of reciprocal interactions. She concluded that if their relationship was to continue in a productive fashion, they must both be involved in resolving this impasse. She decided to explore with Jim at their next meeting his reasons for abruptly changing the terms of their agreement. In this way she did not continue to 'react' with anger to the incident, rather she chose a professional response.

When Sally introduced the topic at the next session she began by sharing her reactions to his request. Jim was then able to describe how her critique of his handling of a previous interview had left him feeling unsure that he had any ability as a social worker. Sally was

astonished to learn that what she thought was clear, direct feedback could have such a devastating effect. She decided to explore his past experience with positive and negative feedback. Jim told her that as an untrained worker he had been very sensitive to feedback from field educators, fearing that he would lose his job if he were not 'good enough'. In fact, he had received almost no negative feedback from his busy and preoccupied field educator in the welfare department. It appeared that he had transferred into the current relationship thoughts, assumptions, and fears about job performance that were inappropriate to the education task. These perceptions had affected the way he received feedback about his competence. His fear about dealing with authority manifested itself in attempts to control his instructor's input and perceived potential to harm him.

Based on this information, Sally suggested they review their contract in order to clarify the expectations each had of the other. Through this discussion they articulated the differences in performance expectations between a learning situation and an employment situation. They also examined the difference between a field instruction and job supervision relationship. They clarified that Jim needed to feel validated in what he did know in addition to receiving feedback about what he did not know. As Jim left the office, Sally felt pleased that she had responded to her concern that 'something was going on' that had provoked such strong reactions on both their parts.

Source: Bogo & Vayda (1998, 41-42)

REFLECT

- What do you think of Sally's response to Jim's request to 'carry the session' himself?
- What are the main issues? Do these include any of the six issues that have been identified?
- Which of Boga and Vayda's supervision styles is reflected in Sally's approach?
- How would you have handled the situation?

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR AND ETHICAL EXPECTATIONS

Social advance depends as much upon the process through which it is secured as upon the result itself.

(Jane Addams, 2002 [1907]).

Ethics provide us with a set of values, principles and standards by which our actions can be judged. They involve moral decisions in practice and guidance for decision-making. Professional ethics are an integral part of human service work and as such, ethical issues play a central role in field education. As a field educator you will be required to assist students understand and apply ethical theories, ethical and practice principles and codes of ethics. In Section 1 you were encouraged to download the *AASW Code of Ethics* (AASW, 2010) and consider which of its values would be most relevant to student placements.

Cleak & Wilson (2007, pp. 163-164) cite (Cory, Cory & Callanan, 1998) six major principles that underpin traditional codes of ethics related to the human services:

1. **Autonomy** This refers to an individual's autonomy or self-determination and being able to live and act freely making one's own choices. Social workers balance autonomy with other frameworks, such as an ethic of care. The field educator enables the student to make informed choices about their practice, though the field educator's legal and ethical obligations to the agency and clients limit this principle.
2. **Non-maleficence** This refers to doing no harm.
3. **Beneficence** This refers to promoting good for other people, and the moral obligation to act in a way that benefits others.
4. **Justice** Providing equal treatment to everyone regardless of race, gender, culture, disability, age, socio-economic status, religion or sexual orientation.
5. **Fidelity** This refers to being honest and fulfilling one's responsibilities of trust in a relationship.
6. **Veracity** It refers to truthfulness and accuracy

Briggs and Kane (2000) suggest that these principles, which apply to human service workers and their clients, are also relevant to the student-field educator relationship. Some examples are:

- A student doesn't have the capacity to make an informed choice about their practice with a client. The field educator will need to balance a student's autonomy with the principle of non-maleficence in relation to a client, as well as other legal obligations they have to their organisation.
- When a student may be at risk of harm due to inexperience the field educator has a responsibility to ensure their safety, which might conflict with their wishes.
- Students need to be informed about their rights and be aware that information about their performance on placement will be shared with others. In the same way, a student needs to inform his or her clients about their rights and the fact that information about them will be discussed with the field educator.



READING REFLECTION 39

READ

Briggs, L., & Kane, R. (2000). Ethics in Fieldwork. In L. Cooper and L. Briggs (Eds.), *Fieldwork in the Human Services – Theory and Practice for Field Educators, Practice Teachers and Supervisors* (pp. 131-144). St Leonards NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Ethical and legal issues. *Making the Most of Field Placement* (2nd Edn.) (pp.158-166). Australia: Thomson.

Both these readings provide vignettes and examples of how ethical principles apply to field education.

OR

REFLECT

Read the following vignette, which comes from Beddoe and Maidment (2009: 89).

Sam (26) works with young men in a drop in centre. One day Andy (29), who has a history of alcohol addiction but hasn't had a drink for nearly a year, brings his four-year old son into the centre. The child >>

has a cold and is irritable and wants to go home. Andy is enjoying his time with some of his mates; he loses his patience and gives Tom a really hard slap on the leg. It leaves a big red mark, and Sam notices some old bruises.

Consider if Sam was your student and he came to you for advice about what to do. Reflect on the following questions, in relation to the client and your role as Sam's field educator:

- What legal obligations are relevant?
- What ethical principles are relevant?
- What ethical codes are relevant?
- What organisational policies are relevant?
- What other principles would you consider?

ETHICAL DEBATES AND ISSUES IN FIELD WORK

A Code of Ethics can be a useful guide for addressing ethical issues with a student. It is important to emphasise with your student that a Code is a living document, subject to debate and change. For example, a criticism of the previous version of the AASW *Code of Ethics* (AASW, 1999) was that it reflected western values of individualism and independence and that, despite incorporating recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people, the Code still did not reflect the nature of diversity amongst different groups. The latest version of the *Code of Ethics* (AASW, 2010) has addressed this criticism in several ways. The authors consulted with the AASW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Working Group as well as many other groups and individuals. They developed a new section: 5.1.2. 'Culturally competent, safe and sensitive practice' which, amongst other things, emphasises the diversity of different cultures in Australia and the necessity to seek guidance from within the community itself about how to practise social work that is culturally competent, safe and sensitive.

There are also various other tools that you can use with a student, which are suggested by a number of writers. Rhodes' (1991) competing values model, which is described in the reading by Briggs and Kane (2000, see previous Reading Reflection), uses dialogue and debate in a five-stage process that involves:

- constructing (or addressing) a real moral dilemma;
- addressing the question of responsibility;
- identifying the focus of control;
- acting on the dilemma;
- justifying the action.

Lowenberg et al (2000) propose using the following 'Ethical Assessment Screen':

1. Identify your own relevant personal values in relation to the ethical dilemma, which faces you.
2. Identify any societal values relevant to the ethical decisions to be made.
3. Identify the relevant professional values and ethics.
4. Identify alternative ethical options that you may take.
5. Which of the alternative ethical actions will protect to the greatest extent possible your client's rights and welfare, as well as the rights and welfare of others?
6. Which alternative action will protect to the greatest extent possible society's rights and interests?
7. What can you do to minimise any conflicts among 1, 2, and 3?
8. What can you do to minimise any conflicts between 5 and 6?
9. Which alternative action will result in your doing the "least harm" possible?
10. To what extent will alternative actions be efficient, effective, and ethical?
11. Have you considered and weighed both the short-term and long-term ethical consequences of alternative actions?

In response to the question: How should we act? Beddoe and Maidment (2009: 89) propose asking these questions:

- What is the client's point of view?
- How should I handle the differences between my clients and my own views?
- What choice is required?
- What are the alternative courses of action?
- What position does each of these alternatives represent?
- Is the solution I have reached consistent with my goals as a social worker?

The authors suggest that taking into account the following points will assist in ethical decision-making: justification; consequences; ethical principles; practice principles; and ethical codes.

As well as ethical principles and professional codes of ethics, professionals are required to adhere to legislation, and various regulations also govern the activities of human service organisations (Cleak and Wilson, 2007; Beddoe and Maidment, 2009). Universities also are bound by legislation to ensure that students are treated fairly, that they are placed in safe environments and that they are covered by insurance for personal injury and professional indemnity. In Chapter 16 of Cleak and Wilson (2007), the authors outline the different responsibilities of training institutions, agencies and students.



READING REFLECTION 40

REFLECT

Read the list below:

1. Australian Association of Social Workers. (2010). *Code of Ethics*. Canberra: AASW. Retrieved from: <http://www.aasw.asn.au/publications/ethics-and-standards>
2. International Federation of Social Workers. (2004). *Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ifsw.org/en/p38000324.html>
3. Your organisation's Privacy, and Client Information Policies
4. Organisational policies related to information systems and file sharing, including communication technology
5. The relevant university rules around student conduct and behaviour
6. University policies and procedures related to field education placements
7. Research ethics guidelines for human services disciplines, such as guidelines for ethical health research on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and NHMRC guidelines (for research based placements)

Ask yourself the following questions: Which of these areas do you have a working knowledge of? What other legislation and policy frameworks are relevant to the work of your organisation? Are there areas that you would like to clarify prior to a student starting their placement? How can you best assist your student to learn about these different frameworks?

THE FIRST LIAISON CONTACT

Whenever it is possible, liaison contacts are made in person by a university staff person or an appointed representative of the university, such as a social worker who is an experienced field educator. However, liaison contacts may be by teleconference or videoconference. The first liaison contact has five major purposes:

1. To review the placement thus far;
2. To problem-solve with the student and field educator any practical problems such as space, work flow, travel costs, time, co-field education arrangements;
3. To assist in clarifying the students' Education Plan and ensure that all the areas including Practice Standards are being addressed adequately;
4. To assist with the development of ideas for research and other projects; and
5. To organise the mid-placement visit.

In preparation for the first liaison contact, it is essential that the student and field educator have discussed and developed a draft Education Plan. This document will be addressed during the first liaison contact, so that the final Education Plan, with input from all parties, can be agreed upon. If possible, the draft document should be sent to the liaison staff prior to the first visit. This should give the person enough time before the meeting to prepare their comments and feedback.

Ideally, both the field educator and student will have had some contact with the liaison staff prior to the first contact, even if this is just an email or quick introductory phone call. Sometimes the liaison staff will contact the student to arrange the first meeting in order to reduce any anxiety the student may be feeling.



CHECKLIST FOR THE BEGINNING PHASE (Supervision sessions 1–4 of a placement)

This checklist/summary of items is used by Charles Sturt University (2010) as a benchmark for field educators to check what they should cover during supervision sessions in the beginning phase (Sessions 1–4). It draws on Shulman's (1993) chapter on beginning supervision

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relationships and material from workshop presenters Claire Bunday and Sheila Truswell, who have run AASW workshops on supervision over many years. Adapt it to what you think should be covered in the beginning phase of the field education supervision relationship, now that you have studied the material related to this phase.

- Orientate student to agency/area/field of practice.
- Tune in to issues student and field educator bring to the placement (e.g. past experiences).
- Clarify expectations of each other and obligations related to field educator's authority, and agency accountability.
- Discuss ethical issues
- Clarify student and field educator roles.
- Discuss issues that might arise during the beginning phase of the placement e.g. how much structure do student and field educator need? How will differences of opinion be dealt with? How will you deal with resistance?
- Discuss agency structure (formal and informal).
- Discuss relevant policies such as Freedom of Information, agency codes of conduct and confidentiality requirements, Occupational Health and Safety, use of agency cars, etc.
- Establish written supervision agreement as part of the Education Plan including:
 - purposes of supervision (education, support, administrative)
 - length and timing of supervision sessions
 - obligations of field educator and student
 - content and structure of supervision sessions
 - how the Education Plan will be used
 - format for preparation
 - format for recording
 - set times for evaluation and review of supervision sessions.
- Compare student and field educator's learning styles and implications for supervision.
- Establish student's baseline competencies and priority learning areas.
- Develop Education Plan.
- Prepare for first liaison contact.



FURTHER READING

- Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Getting started (student and field educator). *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). (pp.25-38). Australia: Thomson.
- Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Charting the course for placement - contracts and agreements. *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). Australia: Thomson.
- Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). Ethical and legal issues. *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). Australia: Thomson.
- Beddoe, L., & Maidment, J. (2009). Ethics in Action. *Mapping Knowledge for Social Work Practice: Critical Intersections*. Australia: Cengage Learning.
- Briggs, L., & Kane, R. (2000). Ethics in fieldwork, in L. Cooper and L. Briggs (Eds.), *Fieldwork in the Human Services: Theory and Practice for Field Educators*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin.
Read chapter 11: Ethics in fieldwork.



The middle phase of field education

In this middle phase of professional field education, field educators face the challenge of pushing the student to make corrections, to work through resistance or obstacles to their own learning, and to help them deal with their own self-discovery process (Schneck, Grossman & Glassman, 1990). Part of this process may involve unlearning non-productive practice habits learnt elsewhere. These may interfere with the learning process and development of reflective practice abilities. This is particularly relevant for students who have had many years experience in welfare, often without opportunities to develop linkage and reflection skills.

The tasks for this phase then, are to:

- implement the education plan;
- develop student learning towards autonomy and reflective and reflexive practice;
- monitor evaluation of student progress; and
- develop the supervision relationship.

During the middle phase of practicum, both student and supervisor should gain a clear idea of how the student is progressing and whether this is satisfactory or not. The Education Plan may need to be reviewed, and tools of assessment added, in order to set up adequate monitoring and evaluation tasks. By the mid-practicum liaison contact, students and supervisors should be developing an understanding of the student's areas of competence, and which areas need further development. They should also be planning what needs to be accomplished in the second half of practicum.

Schneck, Grossman & Glassman (1990) have emphasised the importance of continued weekly supervision sessions during this stage. They point out that ongoing structures and regular assignments need to be built into the sessions in order to continue with growth-oriented instruction. Statements from the student, such as 'I don't really need supervision today', alert the field educator that the student could have stopped functioning as a learner and is acting like an employee.

An important part of the middle phase of the practicum is to move the supervision relationship through developmental phases.

DEVELOPING REFLECTION AND THE SUPERVISION RELATIONSHIP

As noted, the middle phase of the supervisory relationship with students is usually the time that reflection develops. This is when the supervision relationship moves from the content focused first phase ('What am I supposed to learn and can I do it?') to the process-oriented second phase ('How am I going and how is the supervision relationship developing?'). Some students and field educators do manage to move past Phase 2 and reach Phase 3 of Gardiner's (1989) model, but Gardiner found that this is relatively rare and depends on where individual students and field educators are in their own development, as well as the quality of their relationship.

It is during the middle phase that the strategies and skills for developing reflective and reflexive practice discussed in this Guide become most relevant.



READING REFLECTION 41

READ

There are some helpful ideas for adding learning tools and tools of assessment to the Education Plan in Cleak & Wilson (2007), particularly Chapter 8, 'Teaching and learning tools', and Chapter 18, 'Assessment and evaluation'.

WORKING WITH EDUCATION PLANS

Having completed the Education Plan, many students feel the temptation to heave a sigh of relief and file it as far away as possible, ready to get on with the 'real work' of placement

Your job as field educator during the middle phase is to keep the education focus alive. Don't allow the placement to slide into the student becoming an unpaid worker for your organisation. Using the Education Plan systematically in supervision sessions (have it as an ongoing agenda item) during the middle phase is one strategy to prevent this and maintain the focus on learning.

As you review progress on particular learning objectives, amend them as necessary to reflect the student's progress. This is the time when you can build more reflective learning activities and evaluation processes into the Education Plan. While these may have been too confronting at the beginning phase for the student to agree to, students may feel more confident to undertake such activities during the middle phase, with support and encouragement from their field educators. Process recordings, seeking feedback from other colleagues after student presentations, video or audio recordings and other reflective activities may be added at this point. These also will help in evaluation.

LEARNING STYLES AND EDUCATION PLANS

The middle phase is the ideal time to request students to formulate or re-formulate learning objectives and activities in ways that consciously challenge their dominant learning style.

For example, if a student is undertaking direct practice with clients and has a concrete type of learning style, discuss how to plan ahead a list of predicted issues

that will arise in the next session with a client, and to identify which theories are being used to do this. Alternatively, if new clients are being seen, the student could agree to read the file in advance and list expected issues, identify the relevant theories and practice models that might assist this client, and prepare a written plan for the interview. In both situations, following the interview, students could review what actually happened, what was useful, and whether such preparation assisted them.

On the other hand, students with a more abstract learning style may be encouraged to try going into an interview with no preparation, having to use their communication skills and intuition to go with the client's priorities and develop a working plan with the client 'in the moment' rather than arriving with a plan in mind.



READING REFLECTION 42

READ

Kolb, D. A., Rubin, I., & Osland, J. S. (1995). Individual and organizational learning. *Organizational behavior: An experiential approach*. 6th edn, (pp. 41-70). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

EXERCISE

Refer back to your work in the exercise in Reading Reflection 24. If you have not already done so, identify your preferred learning style using those readings, or Kolb's original exercise in the reading above.

Which style is your least preferred?

Make some notes of strategies you could try at work to develop your weakest learning style. (Hint: use the chart at the end of the Kolb et al reading, above (p. 65), or adapt some of the activities suggested by Cleak and Wilson.)





FURTHER READING

Shulman, L. (1993). Work-Phase Skills in Supervision. *Interactional Supervision*. pp. 78-140. USA: NASW Press. Some of the skills described in the chapter assist in developing a supervisory relationship with a student/s to Stage 3 functioning (see page 89 of this Guide). These skills include empathy, dealing with resistance, feelings of vulnerability and anger and making a demand for work. This reading also provides a valuable guide to a supervision process for field educators if your supervision relationship is 'stuck'. Discuss this reading in supervision sessions as part of developing your supervision relationship.

REVIEWING THE OVERALL PLAN

As well as reviewing particular learning objectives, it is important to take a 'big picture' look at the Education Plan overall. Does it still provide an accurate 'snapshot' of the student's learning and major activities? Have unanticipated learning opportunities occurred that need to be added? Reviewing the AASW Practice Standards (2003) document also might be useful, particularly for students in their final placement. Are there areas in the Practice Standards that the student can now add to their Education Plan, because they are now addressing these?

ISSUES IN THE MIDDLE PHASE

In addition to the tasks of developing reflection, the supervision relationship and Education Plans, several issues tend to arise during the middle phase of a placement.

Writing skills

The ability to write clearly and concisely is essential in social work (see AASW Practice Standards 1.6 and 1.7). From report and policy writing to recording clinical notes and keeping client records, basic writing skills are crucial. During the middle phase, when evaluation of the student is becoming a priority, gaps in writing skills become apparent.

- **Strategy:** Review the report writing and record keeping standards in the AASW Practice Standards (2003). Is your student writing at a satisfactory standard? Have you included some writing goals, using your organisation's requirements, in the Education Plan? If not, include these as part of your review of the plan. If the student continues to have difficulties with writing, consult your university liaison staff member. Most universities have student services to develop literacy skills for students with learning difficulties, and those using English as a second language.

Stress, burnout, self-care

During the middle phase, tendencies towards burnout, and the need to focus on self-care, become priorities. As the pressure to complete placement tasks increases, so will the need for students and field educators to develop (and monitor) their own self-care resources. Developing reflective abilities includes developing awareness of these aspects of professional life. Conditions for burnout are created by work structures and professional cultures of 'coping'. Some social workers who are field educators, and some students, may have a personal addiction to giving, or an inability to say no, or a reluctance to ask for something for themselves, and it is important to examine your personal 'armour' against burnout, as well as a student's.

- **Strategy:** How could self-care be built into a student's education plan? Are modifications needed at this phase? How would self-care be addressed during supervision sessions?

Assault and other risks

An important part of self-care and occupational health and safety is taking adequate precautions against assault and other risks while on placement. While assaults or accidents can occur at any time, they are more likely to occur once a student is in the midst of the working phase, especially if they are involved in off-site activities such as meetings, home visits. In field education placements you and your student need to be aware of the occupational health and safety processes in place both in your organisation and the university. Some universities have employee assistance schemes that cover students and field educators for debriefing, if an incident occurs.

- **Strategy:** As the supervision relationship develops, it is more likely that students will disclose previous experiences of trauma as a result of such incidences in other placements or work contexts. It may be important to facilitate debriefing for the student if this is a barrier to their learning or professional development. Of course, your own experience will colour your interaction with the student. There may be

transference issues that have to be acknowledged and made explicit as part of developing the supervision relationship.

- During supervision, review that the student knows what occupational health and safety processes are in place both in your organisation and the university;
- Discuss any previous incidents the student may have experienced while at work or on a previous placement - are there leftover issues that need addressing in the current context?;
- If issues related to this arise during the middle phase, consider adding this as a learning objective to the Education Plan.

Working with diversity

Often it is during the middle phase that issues of diversity (including gender, ethnicity, sexual preference, disability) become more apparent, especially if there are differences between the field educator and student, or between the student and the organisation and its clients or other colleagues. Modelling anti-oppressive practices and strategies to develop culturally competent and safe practices are particularly important during the working phase of the placement.

- **Strategy:** Address with your student any issues relating to diversity that arise during this phase of the placement. Think about how you would do this before it happens.

PREPARING FOR THE MID-PRACTICUM LIAISON CONTACT

Most universities visit students and field educators at the mid-placement point of a practicum as part of the assessment process to determine whether a student will pass or fail. In some situations the mid-practicum liaison meeting is one of the only times that co-field educators meet with the student together, along with the university liaison staff member.

The mid-practicum visit can be a stressful time for all, as well as a valuable learning opportunity. Whether there is a set agenda for discussion, or the student is expected to have prepared a presentation in advance, the education plan will play a central part in this meeting.

Generally, the main purposes of the mid-practicum liaison visit include:

- To review practicum progress and evaluate the student's performance to this point in consultation with the student, field educator/s and university field education liaison staff.
- To identify new learning objectives for the second half of the practicum and how these will be achieved. This re-contracting is written up and becomes part of the education plan. It includes a review of the original education or project plans and how the student is progressing on their objectives and strategies. A major focus is often on how the student is integrating theory and practice and moving towards reflection-in-action and/or reflexive practice.
- To review how the supervision relationship is developing.
- To identify any problems and co-operatively work out education solutions.
- To plan for future learning in the second half of the placement.

PROCESSES AND ISSUES

Universities should provide clear documentation about what preparation is needed. Students may be required to prepare written or taped material. They may also have to prepare a presentation for university staff and field educators during the meeting. By the time of the mid-practicum visit, both the student and field educator should be fairly clear about the student's progress and whether he/she is on target for completing a satisfactory placement.

Field educators need to prepare carefully for how they will raise any difficulties the student is experiencing. This visit is the critical time to discuss any difficulties, so that students have the opportunity to address any issues during the second half of the placement. Discussion at this point is needed because it is unfair to leave an issue till the end, resulting in failure, when it might have been resolved if brought to the student's attention in time.

A temptation for some field educators is to over identify with, or protect, their students during the mid-placement visit in some way, for example by answering assessment questions on the student's behalf, or even writing assessment tasks for them before the visit. Placements can be prone to these kinds of difficulties when the field educator has failed to distinguish their role as educator from that of helper, and perhaps views the student as a 'client' (though such behaviours would not be helpful to clients in any case). In some cases, early termination of placement may occur as a result of this visit, depending on the circumstances.

Often a series of reports are generated as a result of the visit. These can include mid-practicum reports by the student and/or field educator depending on the university requirements, as well as summaries from university liaison staff.



READING REFLECTION 43

READ

- Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). Chapter 17, 'Roles and Responsibilities of the training institution'.
- Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). Chapter 18, 'Assessment and evaluation students and supervisors'.

REFLECT

- How clear should universities be about their expectations of you as field educator in relation to assessment of students on placement?
- How would you rate your experiences with universities during the middle phase/mid-practicum visit?
- What resources, structures might you insist upon as part of accepting a student for a social work placement in future?



CHECKLIST FOR THE MIDDLE PHASE (Supervision sessions 5–8 of a placement)

The following checklist/summary of items is for the middle phase. It is used by Charles Sturt University (2010) as a benchmark for field educators to check the scope of what they should cover during supervision sessions in the middle phase (Sessions 5–8).

Read through this checklist and adapt it to what you think should be covered in the middle phase of the field education supervision relationship, now that you have studied the material related to this phase.

- Review learning goals regularly – evaluate student’s progress.
- Change/develop goals as necessary – devise challenging learning activities (role plays, use of video tape, public speaking opportunities, presentation of research, publication or media opportunities, etc).
- Deal with resistance.
- Foster the growth of self-awareness and reflection as well as competency in tasks.
- Challenge the student to extend their learning style.
- Make demands on the student for work.
- Encourage more student autonomy.
- Maintain the student role.
- Develop the supervision relationship – monitor its phases and discuss issues.
- Develop the student’s self-care strategies, discuss burnout.
- Prepare for mid-practicum visit.
- Complete mid-practicum report.
- Preparation for mid-practicum presentation.



The ending phase of field education

The ending phase of the supervision relationship is a time for honest review and evaluation of what the student has achieved, and how the supervision relationship itself has developed. Bogo & Vayda (1998) make the point that it is most important that such review is frank, and covers negative as well as positive aspects of the placement experience. The need for critical and explicit feedback within a supportive relationship, identified as being crucial for a successful supervision relationship during the middle phase, is just as important at this phase.

One of the key tasks of the ending phase is to complete unfinished work, transfer work to ongoing workers, and complete unfinished business. Another major task a field education student faces at this point is identifying goals for next placement or for professional development and a suitable career in social work when they graduate. Without honest feedback this task becomes very difficult.

ENDING THE SUPERVISION RELATIONSHIP

Students’ and supervisors’ past experiences of endings can affect how they approach the final phases of a placement. The ending phase of a placement is

one in which the transference and counter-transference issues identified earlier become important. For the student in particular, who is finishing relationships with colleagues and clients developed during the placement, leaving can be a stressful experience, requiring considerable attention during supervision sessions.

There are several possibilities for how a supervision relationship might end. If the relationship has been a positive experience, many supervisors and students can look forward to ongoing friendships or collegiate relationships (and thus avoid separation altogether!). However, sometimes the placement has been experienced as more positive by one party than another and, in this case, the issue needs to be dealt with as sensitively and honestly as possible.

Sometimes, placements finish with a student passing, but a generally troubled atmosphere prevailing in the supervision relationship that has not been resolved. Bogo and Vayda (1998) advise dealing with this honestly and openly. Remember to involve your university field education liaison staff. It is just as important for them to review the placement and finish unfinished business as it is for field educators and students. In situations such as this, field educators or students may be feeling dissatisfied with the liaison or support they have had from field education staff. Resolving such issues with field education staff, and providing feedback to the university through the end of placement report, or other formal process, is an integral part of this phase.

FAREWELL RITUALS

Often students and supervisors mark the end of their supervision relationship with a lunch, or a farewell. A staff party or an announcement in a staff meeting can make a student feel that their contribution has been acknowledged and valued. Bogo and Vayda (1998) make the point, however, that a farewell party alone cannot take the place of careful review and discussion of the placement experience. Farewell rituals without real review will leave the student with an unsatisfied feeling of unfinished business.

FURTHER CONTACT WITH CLIENTS AND OTHER ISSUES

Generally, once the placement is over, students should not have further contact with agency clientele. There is no insurance cover for students and they may be placing themselves or their clients at risk by further contact. Such contact may also inadvertently undermine interventions the agency is making. There may also be other legal implications, depending on the practice setting.

In some situations students do stay in touch with clients in a different role from their student identity. If so, the relationship between student, field educator and organisation transforms into something else, and has to be negotiated as such. If the student continues as a worker or a volunteer they may have different lines of accountability and different roles. It is important to make such transitions as explicit and smooth as possible, to reduce the danger of blurring boundaries with the next professional roles.



READING REFLECTION 44

READ

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). *Making the Most of Field Placement* (2nd Edn.). Australia. Chapter 19, 'Finishing well'. Complete the exercises, as relevant.

REFLECT

Assess how you are going with these important parts of the finishing process: Completing the work; Dealing with feelings; Working through unfinished business. Make some plans for how you will deal with these issues if and when they arise.

PREPARING FOR THE FINAL LIAISON CONTACT

If all has gone well during placement, the final liaison contact will hold no surprises and will be a confirmation and consolidation of previous evaluation work. Not all universities hold a final liaison contact right at the end of placement, but most make contact at some stage during this time to ensure that progress during the second half of the placement has gone as planned and that all partners agree on the final outcome for the student. The purposes of this contact are:

- to review the second half of the practicum and student's progress on their learning goals;
- to confirm that all work is completed or transferred appropriately and that there is nothing outstanding from the organisation's perspective;

- to discuss students' learning needs for their next placement that have grown as a result of this practicum experience or discuss future career plans and prospects;
- to discuss any issues related to terminating the placement, including reviewing the supervision relationship now that it is coming to an end;
- to debrief and finish any unfinished business between the three parties in the field education process: students, field educators and university liaison staff; and
- to prepare for final assessment documents required by the university, including the end of practicum report, case studies, draft job applications etc.

It is wise for students and field educators to prepare agenda items for this meeting. Universities often provide their agendas as well. If some major issue has arisen since the mid-practicum point, it should be dealt with before the final liaison contact. As always, early consultation with the university is the best strategy if problems arise in the later phases of a placement.



READING REFLECTION 45

READ

Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2007). *Making the Most of Field Placement*. (2nd Edn.). Australia. Chapter 19 (p. 183), 'Final assessment'.

- What agenda items would you include for the final liaison meeting between you, a student and the university?
- How would you conclude the placement with a student and the university?



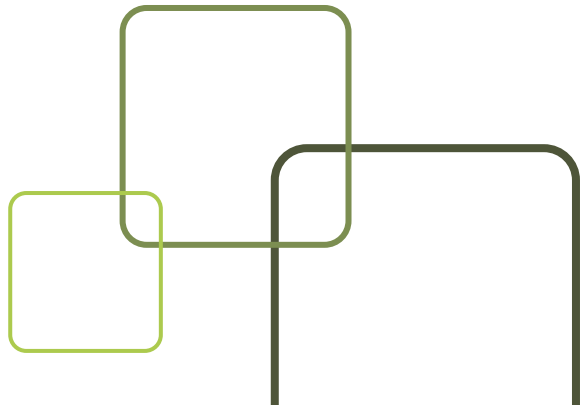


CHECKLIST FOR THE ENDING PHASE (Supervision sessions 9–12 of a placement)

The following checklist/summary of items is used by Charles Sturt University (2010) in the ending phase. It is used as a benchmark for field educators to check the scope of what they should cover during supervision sessions in the final phase of a placement (Sessions 9–12).

Read through this checklist and adapt it to what you think should be covered in the final phase of the field education supervision relationship, now that you have studied the material related to this phase.

- Complete projects, terminate groups, complete client and other work records.
- Hand over clients, cases, unfinished projects.
- Review, evaluate learning, changes in goals, activities and learning style.
- Work with dynamics of previous ending experiences.
- Deal with denial, or maybe feelings of guilt.
- Acknowledge both positive and negative feelings and experiences.
- Review, evaluate supervision relationship.
- Review, evaluate student progress.
- Monitor student finishing relationships with clients.
- Monitor student finishing relationships with colleagues.
- Finish relationship between field educator and student (including unfinished business).
- Prepare for final liaison contact.
- Complete end of practicum report.
- Discuss practicum project.





Conclusion

Thank you for reading this *Guide to Supervision in Social Work Field Education*. We hope you have found it useful.

This Guide is also available online through the website: <http://www.socialworksupervision.csu.edu.au/>

This Guide was funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council. It is part of a continuing national project to develop social work field education that will be auspiced by the AASW. A group with members from each state and territory, major employers and universities will update it and oversee the online postgraduate program.

Please send your feedback to this group. We hope to incorporate your suggestions in the next version of this Guide. Send feedback to: wbowles@csu.edu.au. Thanks also go to the editor of this Guide, Margie Sheedy.

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Glossary

ACCREDITED SOCIAL WORKER Member of AASW who has complied with the annual requirements of Continuing Professional Education (CPE).

ACCREDITATION PANEL The Accreditation Panel is the collective name given to a group of Association members approved by the Board to act as assessors of pre-qualifying social work programs or as consultants to universities that are setting up new social work programs for the purpose of determining whether such programs meet AASW social work education standards.

AGENCY refers to the human service organisation that is offering field education placements to students.

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (AASW or may be referred to as the Association) The AASW is the professional body representing social work in Australia.

CLIENT The individuals, groups, families, organisations or communities provided with social work/welfare services.

COURSE is a series of subjects around a topic within an academic program that may be studied on its own.

DISTANCE EDUCATION is a generic term used to describe structured education in which teachers and learners are separated and communication is maintained through print and other media such as television, radio, telephone, audio and videotapes, and computer networks.

FIELD EDUCATION is one of the compulsory academic social work subjects undertaken within a pre-qualifying Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) or Master of Social Work (MSW) degree and is a core component of the social work education process. Field education is also a compulsory component of some other human service qualifications.

FIELD EDUCATOR The field educator is the social worker/human service worker that is responsible for the delivery and evaluation in the practice setting of the student's field education experience. An external field educator is a field educator who is located in an organisation, which is not the organisation where the student

is undertaking their placement or is located at a different location within the organisation from where the student is placed. Other titles frequently used in the literature for the role of field educator are student supervisor, practicum instructor and field instructor. In situations where student supervision is shared between two or more practitioners (for example between an external field educator and an on-site task supervisor), the term co-field educator is sometimes used.

FIELD EDUCATION CO-ORDINATOR is the university based staff person or persons allocated to manage the field education program within the pre-qualifying social work/human service program.

FIELD EDUCATION LIAISON VISITOR is the university person allocated to liaise with the field educator and the student for the duration of the placement. Field education liaison staff may be members of the program staff or contracted by the university to perform this role. The field education liaison visitor is also referred to as the university liaison visitor, the liaison visitor or the liaison officer.

FIELD EDUCATION PLAN refers to the document that is drawn up jointly by the student and their field educator, which sets out the student's learning goals, tasks and methods for evaluating their work. The Education Plan formalises the placement process and is used in the assessment of the placement. Other titles often used are learning plan, learning agreement and learning contract.

FIELD PLACEMENT A field placement (as opposed to classroom based experience) is a structured learning experience where a student is placed in an agency or a community working on particular tasks, under the supervision of a social worker/human service worker, for a specified number of days. This is part of a field education subject. Other titles frequently used in the literature are practicum and placement.

FIELDS OF PRACTICE Fields of practice are either particular areas of practice, such as corrections or schools, or practice which focuses on a particular client group, such as children at risk or persons with a disability, persons with a mental health problem or mental disorder, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or rural and remote.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION are the learning outcomes related to knowledge skills and values, and learning for practice in field education required for pre-qualifying social work programs.

HUMAN SERVICE PROVIDER is an individual agency, government or non-government or private practice provider within the human services sector.

HUMAN SERVICES SECTOR is the sector of the market place that provides service to people in the area of general community services, health, ageing, disability, children and families, justice and disadvantaged groups and includes services provided in this area by government, non-government, private practice and communities.

KNOWLEDGE FOR PRACTICE This is commonly used to mean knowledge from other disciplines that is regarded as an integral part of social work education.

LEARNING GOALS refer to the individual learning goals a student develops around each field placement that they undertake.

LEARNING OUTCOMES are the practice objectives of the AASW Practice Standards applied to the learning setting within the social work program. Such outcomes also may include other learning outcomes, in harmony with the AASW Practice Standards, as the social work or other human service program requires.

METHODS OF INTERVENTION IN SOCIAL WORK The methods of intervention in social work include community work, case work with individuals and families, group work, social planning and social action, social policy analysis and development, and management.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS There are a number of requirements related to the delivery of a social work program in the AASW Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards. These requirements describe the minimum, often specific numerical figures, rather than the ideal or a higher standard of excellence which a particular social work academic unit may choose to follow.

MINIMUM STANDARDS The AASW Practice Standards describe the minimum rather than a higher standard of excellence that a social work program may choose to require.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES These are the outcomes necessary for first and second field education placements.

PRACTICE is any written, spoken or physical action (and any thought related to it) that social workers/human service workers engage in as professionals. It is clear from the definition that social work practice can occur beyond the workplace.

PRACTICE KNOWLEDGE This is a shorthand term for the body of knowledge, skills and value stances that has been developed by the profession of social work to inform its work.

PRACTICE SETTING Practice setting is the location in which social work/human service practice occurs, whether on a paid or voluntary basis. Examples are a community setting, a social work agency, and an organisation.

PRACTICE TEACHING This is the term used for teaching social work practice knowledge to students. In the literature it is sometimes used instead of field education.

PRACTICE OBJECTIVES are outcomes of social work practice as described in the AASW Practice Standards. Other outcomes of practice also described are Standards and Indicators.

SERVICE USER is a person who receives services supplied by the human services sector.

SOCIAL WORKER A social worker is a person who is eligible for membership of the AASW. The other title frequently used in the literature is social work practitioner.

SOCIAL WORK QUALIFICATION Named qualifications in social work include a Bachelor of Social Work or a Master of Social Work (qualifying), both of which qualify graduands for membership to the AASW provided the university program has been accredited by the AASW.

SUPERVISION The guidance of the student by the field educator is traditionally referred to as supervision. Professional social work supervision needs to occur in a formal capacity for no less than one and a half hours per five full days of placement (or alternatively three hours per fortnight).

TASK SUPERVISOR An agency task supervisor oversees the day-to-day running of the placement when the field educator is supervising a student on an external basis from an outside organisation, or from a different location within the organisation, or if the field educator thinks another person in the agency would provide a student with particular expertise in an area. The task supervisor does not require social work qualifications but allocates work and provides professional guidance to the student on a day to day basis. The field educator must be social work trained for social work students and is required to provide professional social work supervision as specified by the AASW.





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Recommended websites

- Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework <http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/indigenous-initiatives/practice-guides/aboriginal-cultural-competence-framework>
- Australian Association of Social Workers. <http://www.aasw.asn.au/>
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. <http://www.aihw.gov.au/index.cfm> or <http://www.aihw.gov.au/>
- Cultural Competence Guidelines and Protocols <http://eccv.org.au/library/doc//CulturalCompetenceGuidelinesandProtocols.pdf>
- Cultural Diversity Guide http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/multicultural/downloads/cultural_diveristy_guide_2006.pdf
- Example of local government guide to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Illander communities: Muswellbrook shire Council Community Services page: <http://www.workingwithatsi.info/content/FYU.htm>,
- International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). <http://www.ifsw.org/>
- Queensland Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Collaborative. (2007). *The Clinical Educator's Resource Kit: The Feedback Process*. Retrieved from <http://www.qotfc.edu.au/resource/index.html?page=65380>
- The New Social Worker On Line: the place for social workers on the net: http://www.socialworker.com/home/Feature_Articles/Technology/
- Working with ATSI people and communities: <http://www.workingwithatsi.info/content/FYU.htm>
- World Association for Cooperative Learning (WACE). <http://www.waceinc.org/>

