

ASWEAS Field Education Standards

AASW Board Approved Version
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Section 4 Field Education Standards

Introduction

Field education aims to provide students with a robust and fulfilling learning experience from which they gain a strong sense of professional competence and the confidence that they are ready to enter the profession. To achieve this outcome providers will ensure that the field education experience is a collaborative endeavour between the provider, the student, host organisations and supervisors, and that the focus of activities is on learning outcomes directly linked to AASW practice standards.

Field education is a distinctive pedagogy for social work education. It enables students to integrate classroom learning with professional practice so that students reflect on and refine their ways of thinking, doing and being. Field education socialises students into the profession through immersion in real practice contexts, while allowing a constructive and reciprocal learning space to develop. Students make sense of what it means to be a social worker by developing their professional identity, integrity and practice frameworks.¹

Supported by field education partners in practice settings, students achieve deep learning through the application of knowledge, reflection, feedback and critique of practice experiences. Through this process of engagement and refinement of their understanding of their role, and of themselves as professionals, they understand the complex, changing and ambiguous nature of practice.²

TEQSA provides overall advice and guidance on the Higher Education Standards Framework (2015)³ requirements that must be met by all HEPs.

The TEQSA Guidance Note on Academic Quality Assurance (2017)⁴ requires that where course delivery involves other parties, such as learning in a workplace, providers must ensure that arrangements for supervision of students are quality assured, and in particular that care must be taken that students are not subject to indifferent supervision or left to fend for themselves resulting in poor learning outcomes and/or loss of well-being. The TEQSA Guidance Note on Work Integrated Learning (2017)⁵ provides further information on the intent of the standards and risks to quality. The ASWEAS Field Education Standards aim to complement the national standards without duplicating them.

¹ Adapted from National Field Education Network Statement (2016)

² Adapted from National Field Education Network Statement (2016)

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2015L01639>

⁴ <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/latest-news/publications/guidance-note-academic-quality-assurance>

⁵ <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/latest-news/publications/guidance-note-work-integrated-learning>

3.1 Field education learning experiences will enable graduates to demonstrate their ability to meet AASW practice standards across a range of diverse client groups and environments.

- 3.1.1 Students will complete 1,000 hours of professional practice learning involving no more than three placements.
- 3.1.2 At least two placements will involve distinctly different practice learning experiences.
- 3.1.3 At least 500 hours of placement experiences must be undertaken in Australia.
- 3.1.4 No placement will be less than 250 hours.
- 3.1.5 500 hours of placement time will be undertaken in a direct practice role involving the application of professional interpersonal skills.
- 3.1.6 Students will complete at least one placement in a professional practice setting with an onsite social work field educator.
- 3.1.7 Students in employment will not have a placement in their current work role or under their current supervisor.
- 3.1.8 All placements will involve active involvement of the student in social work roles.

3.2 The scope of assessment of field education activities will cover all learning outcomes required to ensure graduates are safe, ethical and competent to practise.

- 3.2.1 The assessment tasks will be designed and implemented using a range of agreed assessment strategies with contributions from all parties involved in the placement.
- 3.2.2 Contemporary, evidence-informed assessment activities are used, including direct observation of the student in academic and practice education settings.
- 3.2.3 Assessment of student performance on placements will provide clear evidence that they have achieved the specified learning goals and performance standards required.

3.3 The contributions of the classroom and field settings are clearly integrated and reflect the philosophy and purpose of the program.

- 3.3.1 Each placement will have the status of at least one full academic subject
- 3.3.2 Each placement will be accompanied by a HEP program of structured learning activities focused on integrating theory and practice.
- 3.3.3 The HEP program of practice–theory integration activities may be included within the required hours of the placement up to a maximum of 7 hours per 250 hours of placement, with a maximum of 28 hours across all field education placements.
- 3.3.4 Placements will be undertaken over at least two years of the professional social work program of study.
- 3.3.5 Students will successfully complete prescribed academic prerequisites prior to and between each placement.

3.4 A Field Education Unit will be responsible for the quality, conduct and integration of the field education program within the social work program.

- 3.4.1 The Field Education Unit will have an appropriate level of staffing and administrative support dedicated to the management of partnerships and the student experience.
- 3.4.2 The HEP will appoint a Field Education Unit Academic Lead with responsibilities for leadership, research and educational innovation in field education.
- 3.4.3 The Academic Lead must be appointed at Level B or above, a qualified social worker with at least five years post-qualifying experience and eligible for membership of the AASW.
- 3.4.4 The HEP will appoint one or more staff as designated Field Education Coordinator(s) with responsibility for ensuring that all placements meet ASWEAS requirements for student learning outcomes.
- 3.4.5 The Field Education Coordinator (s) will have a minimum of five years (FTE) of post-qualifying practice experience and eligible for membership of the AASW.

3.5 All participants involved in field education experiences will be provided with timely induction, training and support processes.

- 3.5.1 For each placement a Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO) will be appointed to provide oversight and support for the student and Field Educator.
- 3.5.2 The FELO will be on a permanent or contract appointment, with a minimum of five years full-time, post-qualifying practice experience, and eligible for membership of the AASW.
- 3.5.3 The FELO will meet with the student and Field Educator at least twice during the placement on-site or online face-to-face meeting.
- 3.5.4 The Field Educator will be the primary supervisor of the student during the placement with direct responsibility for the assessment of the learning outcomes from the experience.
- 3.5.5 Field Educators will be qualified social workers with a minimum of two years (FTE) post-qualifying practice experience and eligible for membership of the AASW.
- 3.5.6 Field Educators will provide a minimum of 1.5 hours of formal structured supervision of students during each 35 hours of placement, at least half of which is on a one-to-one basis.
- 3.5.7 Externally appointed Field Educators will meet the same requirements, have the same role responsibilities, level of oversight and support, as those employed in agency-based positions.

3.6 Students and Field Educators will have the information they need to fully engage in the field education experience.

- 3.6.1 A Field Education Manual will provide all participants with a detailed framework and administrative arrangements for placements, including attendance and assessment requirements, and roles and responsibilities of all parties.

- 3.6.2 The Manual will include a Learning Management Plan with the learning goals and performance expectations of students specified for each placement in accordance with AASW Practice Standards and ASWEAS General and Profession-Specific Graduate Attributes.

3.7 The conditions under which work experience may be recognised as credit for prior learning will ensure that students are able to achieve the learning outcomes of the program.

- 3.7.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) can be used only for part or all of the first placement.
- 3.7.2 A student who is approved for RPL must undertake a final placement in an organisation that provides onsite supervision by a qualified social worker.
- 3.7.3 The student must have worked for at least the equivalent of three full time years in a setting deemed appropriate as a field education setting required for a first placement student and demonstrate competencies against AASW practice standards.
- 3.7.4 At least the final year of the student's work experience will be within three years of applying for RPL.
- 3.7.5 Assessment of applications for prior learning will be undertaken by a social worker eligible for AASW membership with at least five years post-qualifying experience including as a Field Educator of students on first placement.

3.8 Field placements undertaken overseas will provide a student experience of equivalent quality to that of an Australian setting and will meet all ASWEAS requirements.

- 3.8.1 Direct responsibility for the placement and onsite supervision will be assigned to a qualified social worker.
- 3.8.2 The supervisor will have a minimum of two years practice experience, eligible for membership either of the AASW or the equivalent professional association.
- 3.8.3 The onsite placement will be managed in conjunction with an appropriate in-country auspice such as an in-country accredited social work education program.
- 3.8.4 The program provider must appoint a staff member to liaise directly with their international counterpart.