

## EDUCATION: Professional Experience Program Student Policy and Procedures



*Figure 2. WIL skills, capability and graduate employability*

### 1. Introduction

This document provides students with information about the policies, procedures and expectations related to the Education Professional Experience program. The program is underpinned by the values of excellence, mutual respect, integrity and social justice. It aims to support and develop pre-service teachers (PSTs) to engage as beginning professionals in sites. The program encourages PSTs to be proactive in forging their professional learning pathways and networks. PSTs who demonstrate initiative and an attitude of openness to feedback and service to students and sites, generally maximise their placement opportunities. Figure 2 above shows in a holistic way the important capabilities for PSTs to become effective graduate teachers.

### 2. University WIL

Professional Experience in Education and Care settings is part of the broader Flinders University Work Integrated Learning (WIL) program designed in consultation with employing sectors and students to support students' success and to showcase their courage, vibrancy, and enterprise through rich, real-world experiences. More general information about WIL at Flinders can be accessed at: [https://www.flinders.edu.au/cilt/wil/wil\\_home.cfm](https://www.flinders.edu.au/cilt/wil/wil_home.cfm)

### 3. Accreditation requirements

The College of Education, Psychology and Social Work (EPSW) at Flinders University offers Bachelor of Education and Master of Teaching Initial Teacher Education (ITE) degrees which meet the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), the Department of Education SA and the Australian Children's

Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) accreditation requirements. These requirements ensure graduates have the necessary qualifications to become registered as a teacher in a school or early childhood setting. National accreditation requirements govern the number and length of placements. This means that:

*Undergraduate PSTs are required to undertake no fewer than 95 days of professional experience in the Early Childhood Degree and 80 days in the primary and secondary degrees. Master of Teaching students must undertake no fewer than 60 days of practicum experience. Placement blocks must be undertaken on a full-time continuous basis to ensure that PSTs experience continuity in their block placement and can achieve the AITSL Graduate Standard. Placement sites need to be as diverse as possible.*

#### **4. Summary of inherent requirements for undertaking teaching degrees and fitness for placement**

The following link provides students with information regarding the inherent or core requirements so that they can make an informed judgement about their ability to undertake teaching. It also provides information for students with health conditions, impairments and disabilities regarding access plans and health and counselling support. Prior to placement students should discuss with their Academic Coordinator any concerns they may have regarding their fitness for placement.

[http://www.flinders.edu.au/ehl/fms/education\\_files/courses/Education\\_IR\\_%20Jan%2017.pdf](http://www.flinders.edu.au/ehl/fms/education_files/courses/Education_IR_%20Jan%2017.pdf)

#### **5. Professional Communication**

In all communication with University staff and sites it is important for pre-service teachers to have an email signature block that identifies their full name, student ID and course/year level. Further information is provided in the lectures and on the professional experience webpage. Staff communicate with many students and may not respond to emails if students do not have an appropriate signature block. Professional and respectful language and high standards of spelling and grammar are expected at all times. Students need to respect that staff may not be available to respond to emails after hours or within short time frames. In an emergency the Director of Professional Experience can be contacted. Professional and appropriate use of social media and general confidentiality regarding University programs, placement sites, staff and students is to be observed at all times. PSTs are advised in the lecture series regarding legal and ethical conduct.

#### **6. Grade Point Average (GPA)**

A student's Academic Record shows their Grade Point Average (GPA). GPAs are taken into consideration in relation to scholarships, placement sites and applications to repeat a placement. A GPA of 5 or more indicates that a student has a strong understanding of curriculum theory and practice and is committed to their studies. If a student has a low GPA they may be counselled out of their teaching degree.

#### **7. Professional Experience websites and resources**

Each professional experience topic has a FLO site, which includes the topic SAM, resources, assessment and topic specific information. There is also a generic FLO site with general announcements and information about professional learning and career opportunities. The Professional Experience Webpage has information and resources for students and sites regarding preparation for placement, Handbooks, and reports, staff contacts etc. View <https://staff.flinders.edu.au/colleges-and-services/epsw/education-placement-liaisons-information>. Students are reminded to engage regularly with each of these sites.

## 8. Placements

- **Pre-requisites**

There are pre-requisites that must be completed before students can enrol in a professional experience topic, including preparation lecture series and curriculum specialisation topics. Students are advised to contact [askflinders@flinders.edu.au](mailto:askflinders@flinders.edu.au) for inquiries related to study plans and topic enrolments. It is particularly important to request a new study plan if studying part time or if a student withdraws from or fails a topic.

- **InPlace**

InPlace is an integrated learning online web-based program used by Flinders' staff and students to allocate and manage student placements. University staff that coordinate and manage placements use In Place to: request placements from sites, manage requests for placements, allocate students to placements, notify students and agencies of placements and coordinate and manage other placement related processes. Students are advised in lectures about using InPlace and the compliance documents they need to upload. These will include, a Working with Children Police clearance and RAN certificate, evidence of LANTITE completion, and Medical Practitioner Statement (early childhood students only). A student's placement allocation will not be released to them until all relevant required documents are uploaded to Inplace. If a student misses the due date for their placement application they need to submit an Application for a Late Placement to the Director of Professional Experience. If approved, they may be allocated a placement after other students who have applied on time.

- **Distance from home**

Although we endeavour to allocate students to sites within a reasonable distance from their home, due to the ever-changing nature of site availability and subject matches, students could be offered a site up to 50 kilometres from home. Students are reminded to keep their current address up to date on Student Two as this is considered in the placement allocation process. If a placement is only available beyond 50 kms then the placement team will negotiate with the student to determine if they want to accept the placement and some travel costs may be reimbursed.

- **Country sites**

There are significant benefits in undertaking a country practicum, including future employability and community engagement. Therefore from 2020, students will be required to undertake at least one country placement during their degree and should plan accordingly. Scholarships may be offered to students with a GPA of 5.0 or more undertaking rural placements and willing to go anywhere in the state. This is toward the costs of travel, accommodation and living expenses. The amount of funding will vary depending on the length of placement and location of the rural site.

- **Overseas scholarships**

Funding may be available to support selected 3rd year undergraduate pre-service teachers to undertake a 4-week practicum overseas. This can only apply to selected schools that offer the Australian Curriculum or International Baccalaureate Curriculum. International schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Vanuatu and Fiji have previously been involved.

- **Aboriginal Lands field trip and placement**

3<sup>rd</sup> year/1<sup>st</sup> year MTeach students can apply for a two-week field trip to the remote Aboriginal Lands in November each year. This is not a placement, but students still teach in schools. Those who undertake the field trip can apply to undertake their final professional experience placement in the Lands the following year, if selected. Information regarding the program and the application process is provided to students in lectures and on the FLO site.

- **Diversity of placement types and sites**

Where possible, students are allocated to a variety of site types during their degree. This could include government and non-government sites and sectors. Specialist sites such as Open Access College, the School of Languages and Adelaide Secondary School of English as well as Special Schools may also be offered. For Early Childhood students this could include long day care, and kindergartens/preschools as well as schools. This provides an opportunity for students to experience a diversity of socio-economic, cultural, and rural settings and to develop their employment capabilities and networks. There may also be the opportunity for PSTs to pursue and develop specific areas of interest during their placement through specialist programs such as literacy and numeracy support, STEM, Education for Sustainability or Performing Arts. Some placements have selection criteria and additional assessment requirements, such as the final year extended metropolitan and country placements of 10 weeks and internship programs offered by selected schools. The internship program requires a full year commitment by pre-service teachers and must fit with their study plan. Students undertaking internships and extended placements generally have strong employability outcomes.

## **9. Assessment and reporting processes**

### **9 a. Voluntary Withdrawal from Placement**

In some circumstances Pre-service Teachers may need to withdraw from their placement for unforeseen personal or medical reasons. In this case they need to:

- Discuss their circumstances in the first instance with the Site Co-ordinator and/or mentor teacher
- Then seek advice on the implications of this decision from the University Liaison and University Academic Topic Coordinator;
- Confirm withdrawal from placement and the reasons in writing to the University Liaison, Site Coordinator, Academic Topic Coordinator and WIL Placement Officer (a medical certificate may be required)
- Return any borrowed materials such as keys, books etc. to the site and;
- Formally withdraw from placement through the Flinders University Student Enrolment system; doing this **before** census date will ensure a Withdraw No Fail (WN) grade is recorded rather than a Fail (F) or Withdraw Fail (WF) grade.

### **9b. Imposed Withdrawal from Placement**

The University Academic Topic Coordinator or placement site may withdraw a pre-service teacher from placement for the following reasons:

- The pre-service teacher is consistently unable, despite guidance, to perform satisfactorily without an inappropriate or an unattainable degree of supervision from the mentor and/or others with respect to their teaching performance. That is, despite adequate timely and detailed feedback from the mentor or others the pre-service teacher is unable to develop a sufficient level of independence with the majority of the core roles and responsibilities reasonably required of a pre-service teacher (see roles and responsibilities of a pre-service teacher in the placement Handbook);
- The pre-service teacher breaches the legal, ethical, or professional codes of conduct of the organisation providing the placement;
- The pre-service teacher demonstrates gross negligence or misconduct in the performance of an assigned duty; or the pre-service teacher performs in a manner detrimental to self or others;
- It becomes apparent that the pre-service teacher is not medically *fit for placement*.
- The placement provider is unable to maintain an appropriate placement experience for the pre-service teacher which is unrelated to their performance.

**Where a pre-service teacher is withdrawn for reasons in dot points 1-3 above, a fail grade will be recorded against the topic irrespective of when this occurs e.g. before or after census date and even if the student withdraws.**

**If a pre-service teacher's placement is terminated because of reasons outlined in dot points 4 or 5 above the pre-service teacher will be assisted to find an alternative placement as soon as practicable and will receive an Interim (I) grade against the topic.**

### **9 c. 'At risk' process and unsatisfactory professional experience**

At any time during the placement, including as part of the interim review process, a PST may be issued with an 'at risk' notification. This is not a Fail but indicates issues of concern and improvements needed.

If a pre-service teacher does not make significant progress and their performance is deemed to be **Unsatisfactory**, according to the relevant Standards a **Fail (F)** grade will be given by the University for the Topic. In these circumstances the PST:

- Is contacted by the Academic Coordinator to meet and discuss their performance and options;
- Is advised of the process to either apply for an exit degree (if the PST has more than one Failed placement or performance is very poor) or to repeat the topic if applicable;
- If applying to repeat a placement a PST needs to submit an application to the Academic Coordinator, by the negotiated due date. The PSTs' academic record, reasons for the request and ability to plan for improvement based on the AITSL Standards will be assessed. Medical or LANTITE evidence may also be required. Academic staff must be assured that another placement can be successful before making a second placement available. If approved, the Director of Professional Experience will write to the PST granting permission with conditions (if any) for the topic to be repeated. The PE WIL Placement Officers are advised of this decision.
- Must seek a revised study plan from Ask Flinders.

**The timing for repeating a professional experience placement will depend on the PST's individual circumstances, level of growth and revised study plan and will usually mean that their course completion date is extended by 6-12 months.**

Information and resources including placement Handbooks with observation, planning and reporting templates, can be accessed from the website. From 2019 final year students will also be required to successfully complete a Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA).

#### **10. Responsibilities of University Liaisons, Site Coordinators and Mentors**

- **Liaisons:**

A University Liaison is allocated to each pre-service teacher during 3<sup>rd</sup> year/1<sup>st</sup> Year M teach and final year placement. Early Childhood pre-service teachers have a University Liaison from their 2<sup>nd</sup> year placement onwards. The University Liaison has extensive teaching experience and is expected to: clarify university expectations for school coordinator/mentors as necessary; facilitate communication between all parties involved in the placement and work with PSTs to identify, discuss and support their professional growth. Liaisons are paid only for a specific number of visits and so may not be available outside of scheduled observation visits.

- **Site Coordinators**

Each site identifies a coordinator to work with pre-service teachers. The site coordinator identifies and confirms placement opportunities with the University. They choose suitable mentors and support orientation, induction, supervision and assessment of PSTs.

- **Mentor teachers**

Each PST is allocated a mentor/s to support and supervise their teaching. This role involves supporting, monitoring, reviewing and assessing the PST's progress and enabling them to meet the Standards and transition into the teaching profession.

**More detailed information about these roles and responsibilities can be found in the Placement Handbooks.**