Policy/Procedure: Access Plan Guidelines for Field Education Placements
Establishment: August 25, 2017
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Date Last Reviewed: N/A
Responsible Officer: Manager, Field Education

1. Purpose

To provide information about Social Work Field Education requirements in order to assist in developing Access Plans for Student Social Workers undertaking placements.

2. Disability Access Plans

- Students who have a disability may require adjustments to improve access to their study or the University.

- Health, Counselling and Disability Services Disability Advisors provide a free, confidential service for students who have a disability. A ‘disability’ can be a medical condition, mental health condition, learning difficulty, or any disability that impacts on study. Carers of people who have a disability can also contact a Disability Advisor to discuss a Statement of Carer Responsibilities.

- Disability Advisors recommend and negotiate adjustments for students which are documented in an Access Plan or Statement of Carer Responsibilities.

3. Policy Context

Flinders has a Disability Policy (2012) which includes the legislative and policy framework that underpin the Guidelines for Reasonable Adjustment to Assessment and Teaching Methods for Students with Disabilities.

Other University, Discipline and Australian Association of Social Work (AASW) policies, standards and guidelines should be referred to when Access Plans are being developed for students planning to undertake their placement, including:

3.1 Social Work Statement of Inherent Requirements

- The Social Work Discipline has developed a Statement of Inherent Requirements (SIR) to help prospective students make informed decisions about whether they
will be in a position to complete the requirements of either a Bachelor of Social Work or Master of Social Work degree.

- Students should read the SIR before making a decision to enrol in either Social Work program. Once on placement, it is expected that students will demonstrate behaviour consistent with the Social Work Inherent Requirements.

3.2 Student Deed Polls

Students are required to sign a University Deed Poll prior to undertaking their placement. By signing the Deed Poll, students acknowledge and agree to University requirements which include:

- Undergoing all health, medical, criminal history and other checks that a Placement Organisation requires prior to participating in a placement with that Placement Organisation.

- Notifying the Placement Organisation and Flinders University:
  - Of any medical or other condition which is pre-existing or develops during the placement that may affect their ability to participate in the placement; and
  - If they are unable to participate in the placement because of illness or any other reason.

3.3 Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (ASWEAS)

ASWEAS Guideline 1.2 Guidelines for field education programs stipulates the requirements for field education placements, including the length, structure and continuity of placements and circumstances for variation to these guidelines.

4. Access Plan Considerations

The Social Work program is committed to facilitating the integration of students with disabilities into the University community. Reasonable adjustments can be made in teaching and/or assessment methods for students with disabilities provided those adjustments do not compromise academic requirements and the ASWEAS.

4.1 Social Work field placements are long and must be completed as one continuous period.

- Students are required by the Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (ASWEAS) to complete 1,000 hours of placement over at least two distinct periods.

- At Flinders, students are expected to complete two 500 hour (approximately 70 days) placements.

- In addition to these requirements, the ASWEAS Guideline 1.2 Guidelines for field education programs states that:
(a) Hours must be completed within the normal working hours / days of the organisation hosting the placement.

(b) No leave of any kind may be included in this requirement; that is, the full 1,000 hours must be completed.

4.2 Flinders requires students to attend placement four days per week and variations to this can only be made in extenuating circumstances.

- ASWEAS Guideline 1.2 Guidelines for field education programs states that:
  
  (a) A minimum attendance of two days per week may be considered in extenuating circumstances. In this case, the overall placement must include at least two full-time (five-day) block periods.

  (b) Variations to this may be considered if it is determined that a five day block is likely to lead to more impaired health or is simply untenable due to the nature of the student’s disability.

  (c) Examples of circumstances which would NOT be considered extenuating include work commitments, family commitments, holidays, changing jobs, financial costs and transitory health matters.

5. Student Responsibilities

5.1 Students are required to sign a Deed Poll as part of pre-placement compliance requirements (refer 3.2).

5.2 If students have a disability that may affect their ability to successfully complete a placement, they should contact a Disability Advisor in the University Health, Counselling and Disability Services who may be able to prepare an Access Plan for them.

5.3 Students with an existing Access Plan who have any concerns about their ability to meet placement requirements are advised to have it reviewed by a University Disability Advisor the semester before enrolling in a Field Education topic.

5.4 Students with an Access Plan are advised to provide a copy to swplacements@flinders.edu.au. This assists with pre-placement planning and matching.