



Social Work

Field Education Placements

Applying for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The College of Education, Psychology and Social Work at Flinders University acknowledges the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and appropriate work experience for field placement. This will apply to students in the Master of Social Work (MSW GE) and the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW).

Based on the eligibility requirements of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) the Discipline has adopted the following principles and criteria for eligibility.

Principles and Criteria for Eligibility

- RPL will be considered where a student can demonstrate relevant periods of human service employment. The standard set will be the equivalence of 3 years full-time employment within the last 7 years with at least one year's full time equivalent in the last three years before the application is made.
- Equivalent employment will be determined on the basis of position specifications provided by the applicant. The key factor will be that the position would normally be given to a person with a relevant social work degree.
- The student will need to demonstrate that during 3 years of that employment they have been actively engaged in activities that are identified with social work or human service practice (e.g. assessment, counselling, case work, community work, group work and case management).
- RPL will only be considered for the **first** placement in the MSW and BSW programmes.
- Part RPL for placement will not be granted, only applications for full RPL will be considered.
- Learning Outcomes required as part of the Stage 2 RPL submission needs to be formally certified by signature by two independent Social Workers. See Stage 2 section of this document for more information.

Process

Students who believe they meet the above criteria should complete and lodge a written preliminary application for RPL.

- The documentation will provide detailed evidence of human service employment over at least the last 7 years;
- CV's that cover this employment history and highlight the equivalence of 3 years human service practice in employment which normally requires degree level eligibility and;
- the details of employment in the above mentioned 3 year period that demonstrate application of relevant methods and skills.

Stage 1

Applications should include:

- Cover letter outlining how you meet the specified criteria (max 1 page). Your name, student ID number and topic code should appear at the top of the page.
- Official Position Descriptions of each of your positions relevant to this application (where possible)
- Resume (or cv) which includes detailed information about your employment for at least the last seven years; for each position held you should clearly state the position held, the agency, the dates employed (Day/Month/Year – Day/Month/Year) and whether the position was **full time or part time** (if part time please indicate FTE).

RPL Employment History Stage 1 form *required if applicant has three or more positions requiring assessment.

Stage 1 applications are to be lodged no later than the END OF WEEK 5 (of the semester prior).

I.e. for semester 1, applications must be lodged in semester 2 of the previous year and for semester 2; applications must be lodged in semester 1.

Stage 1 applications must be lodged electronically through the Flinders University credit application portal: <https://www.flinders.edu.au/study/apply/credit-transfer>

You will receive notification by email that your application has been received, and you will be advised in writing of the outcome of your preliminary application within **2 weeks** of the application submission date.

There are three possible outcomes:

- Approval granted to proceed to Stage Two of the process; or
- Request for clarification of information be provided; or
- Approval not granted for further RPL consideration.

Stage 2

Students who are granted approval to proceed to Stage 2 will be invited to lodge an RPL portfolio document demonstrating that they have achieved the relevant *Field Education AASW Learning Outcomes*

Stage 2 applications are to be lodged within **4 weeks** of advice that approval has been given to proceed, no later than the END OF WEEK 10 (of the semester prior).

I.e. for semester 1, applications must be lodged in semester 2 of the previous year and for semester 2; applications must be lodged in semester 1.

The full application will include the following additional portfolio documents that will extend the material lodged in Stage 1:

- Revised cover letter summarising your application (max 1 page): Your name, student ID number and program should appear at the top of the page.
- CV or resume.
- Official Position Descriptions of the positions relevant to this application.
- A document outlining how the student has met the 8 Learning Outcomes of the First Placement topic. (SOAD9107). In this document, applicants will briefly relate their field experience to each of the 8 Learning Outcomes. Please refer to the Stage 2 Learning Outcomes – RPL applications document available on the SW Field Education Placements webpage <https://students.flinders.edu.au/my-course/placements/compliance/social-work>
- The details of two professional referees who hold a social work university qualification recognised by the AASW and have direct knowledge of the applicant's practice, and who can be contacted if necessary, by the RPL Working Party. Referees qualifications should be clearly stated.
- The Learning Outcomes presented in the application needs to be formally certified by signature by two qualified Social Workers who can attest to its accuracy and who can provide external, independent verification/reference as to the accuracy of student's claims.

This application process is designed to provide you with the opportunity to demonstrate that you have the requisite level of professional knowledge and skills required for a student at the end of their first placement.

It is useful to seek advice from your referees or other professional colleagues about your application.

*Clarification regarding the **process** may be sought via email at:*
CEPSW.ECA@flinders.edu.au

Stage 2 applications must be lodged electronically through the Flinders University credit application portal: <https://www.flinders.edu.au/study/apply/credit-transfer>

You will receive notification by e-mail that your application has been received, and you will be advised in writing of the outcome of your application within **4 weeks** of the application submission date. There are three possible outcomes:

- Grant approval for RPL;
- Require major or minor revision to the portfolio (student will be given feedback and invited to resubmit. One resubmission only allowed); or
- Decline approval for RPL

An appeal process as determined by the RPL Committee is as follows:

- Any appeal by a student must be lodged within 10 business days of receipt of advice of the RPL Committee's decision.
- The grounds of appeal must relate to failure in process or oversight of particular elements of portfolio material.
- Appeals should be submitted to: CEPSW.ECA@flinders.edu.au
- The relevant Program Director will review the appeal and make a recommendation to the RPL Committee for consideration.
- The RPL Committee will consider the Program Director's recommendation and the student will be advised of the outcome in writing within 10 business days.

Implications for Subsequent Placement:

In according with the Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards Guideline 1.3.2.3:

If RPL is granted, the following conditions apply for the second field placement. The meeting of these conditions must be considered prior to the granting of RPL for first placement.

- 1) The second placement must be **undertaken in an Australian setting** where the student can gain extensive experience with human services agency clients and practice case work, group work or community practice skills. **The prime focus of the placement cannot be policy or research.**
- 2) Strong preference is for on-site supervision unless in a remote setting where no other placement is available and high-quality external supervision is provided.
- 3) **The placement setting must be different to settings in the student's work history and any experience on which the RPL application was based.** (This also applies for potential Place of Employment applications for subsequent placements).

Important to Note:

- RPL **will not** be granted for the pre-requisite topic SOAD9106 Engaging in Professional Contexts.
- Due to semester timelines, all students applying for RPL are strongly encouraged to engage in the placement planning process for their first placement, until such a time they receive confirmation that their final application for RPL has been approved.
- Extensions to the submission deadlines will not be granted unless supported by appropriate medical certificate or other relevant documentation. Application for extension must be made prior to the due date.
- Clarification of content or invitation to resubmit will extend the timeframes detailed in this information.
- Applications received after due date will still be assessed but there is no guarantee that the assessment process will be completed in time for students to be matched to a placement for the following semester.
- Students who are granted RPL for their First Placement will need to complete the co-requisite topic SOAD9206 Social Work Research in Practice Settings to be eligible to undertake their Final Placement.

*Education, Psychology and Social Work Course Advice **contact information:***

Email: CEPSW.ECA@flinders.edu.au

Phone: 08 8201 2206

Frequently Asked Questions

What job experiences are acceptable to assess RPL against?

While it is acknowledged that life experience informs participation in a Social Work course, and can add some very valuable insights and transferable skills, it does not replace course content. It will need to be demonstrated that applicants have been actively engaged in activities that have been identified with social work or human service practice (e.g. assessment, counselling, case work, community work, group work and case management). Equivalent employment will be determined on the basis of position specifications provided by the applicant. The key factor will be that the position be given to a person with a relevant Social Work degree.

What does RPL mean for first and second placement pre-requisite and co-requisite topics?

Recognition of prior learning is only granted for the first placement topic itself. Recognition of prior learning is not granted for any pre-requisite or co-requisite topics. If you have further questions around what this means for your study plan please contact EPSW Course Advice at CEPSW.ECA@flinders.edu.au

Who can certify my Learning Outcomes document?

As part of the second stage of a RPL application applicants are asked to produce a document outlining how they have been able to meet the 8 Learning Outcomes of the first placement topic. The material presented in the document needs to be formally certified by signature by an external, independent, qualified Social Worker. This person can be a current or former manager, former colleague or a member of a team you work alongside who can verify the accuracy of your claims. It cannot include a current colleague, a person who reports to you, or a friend or family member. If you require more clarification please contact swplacements@flinders.edu.au. This certifying person can also act as one of the referees you provide in your application

What are the implications for future studies and placements?

The ASWEAS outlines the following conditions apply for the second field placement if RPL is granted.

1. The second placement must be undertaken in an Australian setting where the student can gain extensive experience with human services agency clients and practice case work, group work or community practice skills. The prime focus of the placement cannot be policy or research
2. Strong preference is for on-site supervision unless in a remote-setting where no other placement is available and high-quality external supervision is provided

The placement setting must be different to settings in the student's work history and any experience on which the RPL application was based.