

GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN COUNSELLING & HUMAN SERVICES

Frequently Asked Questions about Placement / Fieldwork

What can I expect to gain from placement?

Placements will provide you with the opportunity to develop your skills as a therapist as well as your overall sense of yourself as a therapist. You will have the opportunity to observe and participate in the range of activities that occur in an agency and experience how those activities and demands impact on you, your colleagues and the clients who attend the agency.

You will be expected to set goals with your agency supervisor that meet your needs and allow you to maximise your experience.

How many hours do I have to do?

You are required to complete 78 hours of FACE-TO-FACE counselling spread over at least 26 weeks. Precise hours of attendance will be something you negotiate with the agency where you complete your placement, but attendance at least one day a week is expected. Some agencies may require you to attend for two days or for a twelve month period.

How many clients do I have to see at any one time?

On average, you should see no more than three clients per week.

Can I do placement over less than or more than the 26 week period of classes?

Students are expected to complete a MINIMUM of 26 weeks in placement during the academic year. The reasoning behind this is to give you ample opportunity to experience the full range of activities and processes at the agency and to be able to get to know the agency and how it works in a thorough way. It also provides you with the opportunity to engage in long term work with a client and to follow clients through the therapeutic journey.

As noted above, some agencies may require you to be at the agency for more than the 26 weeks. This needs to be negotiated right at the beginning and discussed with the Placement Coordinator at the university. It's OK to do more or spread it out; we just want to make sure you are adequately supported, especially during non-teaching periods.

Can I do a placement where group work or telephone counselling is the main focus?

The opportunity to do group work is a bonus associated with some placements. However, the MAJORITY of your placement hours must be INDIVIDUAL counselling. Involvement in activities such as group work, telephone counselling, running training or psycho educational programs must **MUST BE DISCUSSED** with the Placement Coordinator at the university prior to the commencement of the placement. Time spent doing group work, telephone counselling and training groups will not be included in the 78 hours of face-to-face counselling required for this unit.

How do other activities count towards placement?

Other activities, such as taking referrals, initial assessments, participation in agency meetings, professional development, etc, are considered part of the overall placement experience and are not credited towards the 78 client hours.

Can I do more than one placement?

If for some reason your placement is terminated before you have accumulated your 78 hours or it becomes apparent early on in the placement that you will not be able to accumulate these hours, you may need to arrange a second placement. Students should not participate in more than one placement at a time.

What is a Reflective Practice Group?

Reflective Practice Groups are small groups of up to eight students facilitated by an experienced therapist. They act as a supportive mechanism to students in placement and allow for you to share your placement experiences with your peers in a context where you are encouraged to reflect on your experiences and learn from each other.

The groups run for two hours per fortnight. Times vary. Typically, two groups are scheduled to run on Tuesday evenings after lectures and others are arranged according to demand on at least one other day of the week during the day. It is not always possible to meet each student's request for a particular Reflective Practice Group. These groups are also considered an integral part of your class participation and MUST attendance is compulsory. As with other aspects of the course, less than 75% attendance will normally be deemed as not having met the requirements of the unit. Unless otherwise negotiated between the group leader and the students, Reflective Practice Groups do not run during semester breaks.

When do I join a Reflective Practice Group?

You will be placed in a Reflective Practice Group by the Placement Coordinator once you have arranged your placement.

If you are planning a placement in a given year, you will join a Reflective Practice Group for that year. All efforts will be made to place you in a group that meets your needs.

Do Reflective Practice Group hours count towards supervision hours?

The groups are considered part of your "tuition/skill development" hours for the purpose of membership to CAPAV/PACFA. Whilst they have supervision component, attendance at these groups cannot be claimed as supervision hours for the purpose of CAPAV/PACFA membership.

Can I do placement at my normal place of work or be paid for placement?

Students should not be employed by or receive remuneration from the agency where they complete their placement. In situations where there is no other option but to use your workplace for your placement experience, you are required to first discuss this with the Placement Coordinator at the university. In such circumstances, you will be expected to arrange that you undertake your placement in a different role from your usual work role, have a different supervisor and are not paid for this work. This needs to be confirmed in writing.

Do I attend placement over semester breaks?

Students are not required by the University to attend placement during semester breaks. In many cases, however, and for obvious reasons, continuity may be expected or required by the agency. You should make sure that this aspect of the placement is made clear at the beginning. The default position, in the event of a misunderstanding, is that the agency's (and clients') needs must be given priority.

What hours will I work?

Usually you attend placement for the normal working day hours of the agency where you are placed.

Am I supervised whilst on placement?

You should receive at least one hour's one-to-one supervision per fortnight by the same person. Some agencies will also provide/expect students to attend group supervision.

Where are the placements?

There are a range of placement settings that may be suitable to your interests and needs. These include community based counselling services, community health centres, local council services, educational settings, specialist agencies (e.g. bereavement services, drug & alcohol services) and church based agencies.

How do I find a placement?

You must find your own placement. Where necessary, support is also provided by the Placement Coordinator. In particular, when any agency requires further information about the Graduate Diploma, you should invite the agency to contact the coordinator or request the coordinator to contact the agency.

Some students use directories online such as Info Xchange or simply conduct online searches for services in particular areas (e.g. refugee services, bereavement services, etc.). You are welcome to seek assistance from the Placement Coordinator to clarify what type of placement agency would best suit your needs.

How will I know what to do?

The Placement/Fieldwork package provides you with the information you and the agency require. You should arrange an appointment with the Placement Coordinator within the first month of the semester to discuss your placement plans. The Placement Coordinator is available to answer your questions and assist you with any concerns.

What do I do after I find a placement?

You need to arrange for your agency supervisor to complete the "Confirmation of Student Placement Information" and the "Acceptance of Student for Fieldwork/Placement Experience" forms which are in the Placement/Fieldwork package and forward this to the Placement Coordinator. Keep copies of ALL paperwork that is completed. You then need to arrange an initial agency visit between yourself, your supervisor and the Placement Coordinator.

Are police checks and working with children checks required?

Many agencies require that a police check be obtained prior to commencing your placement. This is particularly the case where you may be working with children. The forms for applying for a police check can be obtained from the web site: <http://www.police.vic.gov.au> and follow the links to "Our Services and download 'Police Record Check'". You are required to complete this process and meet the costs. Students are eligible for a reduced fee as long as the form is validated by the department's administrative staff.

Some agencies may also require a Working with Children Check. You should clarify this with the agency before you begin placement. Information can be obtained from the web site: <http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren>

Do I need to have vaccinations for placement?

The Faculty of Health Sciences recommends that students are immunised for a selection of infectious diseases. Arrangements will be made at the commencement of first semester for immunisations at the Bundoora campus. Students who decide to update their immunisations are responsible for meeting the cost of this service.

Do I need to do placement this year?

The Graduate Diploma is aimed at students who have a good academic background (usually a first degree), some life experience within the broad human services field, and some structured exposure to face to face or telephone counselling. Sometimes this is sufficient for a student to begin a placement in the year of enrolment and to continue to develop skills as the academic year progresses. However, some agencies prefer students to have completed their course work first. Some students, however, may not have the background and/or the confidence to make good use of a placement in their year of enrolment. In this case, it is recommended that the student enrol in a placement and attend the Reflective Practice Groups in second year.

Sometimes, other life demands may influence your decision. Remember, this is a FULL TIME course – with classes, reflective practice and up to two days of placement, you could have 4 days that you are required to be at uni and placement per week. On occasions, enrolment in second semester of the year of enrolment and first semester of the following year is possible.

Generally speaking, organisations are less likely to be available for student intake mid-year. There may also be logistical issues with respect to joining a Reflective Practice Group mid-year. Students contemplating a mid-year option should consult the Placement Coordinator. Students who are hoping to begin placement in first semester MUST speak with the Placement Coordinator in early February (by phone is suitable) and should have a possible option arranged.

What do I have to do to complete this unit and graduate at the beginning of the next year?

For the placement to be completed, you need to have accumulated at least 78 face-to-face counselling hours and you need to have forwarded the “Placement Assessment Form,” completed by your Supervisor (the form is in your Placement/Fieldwork package) to the Placement Coordinator **no later than the end of February of the year following your enrolment in the course.** NB – A pass in the placement unit, indicating a satisfactory level of applied counselling skill, must be achieved before the Graduate Diploma can be awarded.

What if my supervisor and I disagree on my progress?

Any difficulties or disagreements between yourself and your Supervisor should be flagged with the Placement Coordinator *as soon as possible*. Usually, issues can be resolved at a Placement Liaison Visit. In the rare event of an unresolvable issue, it may be necessary to seek a placement elsewhere. Your Supervisor’s report should not be a surprise, but would normally be expected to be a confirmation of the progress you and your supervisor believe you have been making. In the final analysis, your Supervisor’s report is a recommendation to the University. Whilst the report carries considerable weight, the University always reserves the right to make its own judgement, based on a holistic knowledge of your performance in the Course.

What happens if I don’t get my hours up by the end of the second semester?

If it appears that more time will be required beyond the end of second semester for you to accumulate your 78 face-to-face hours, this needs to be discussed with the Placement Coordinator. If necessary a “Withheld” result will be recorded against your name until you complete the placement requirements. A date by which you should have completed your placement should be negotiated. In some cases there may be a necessity to re-enrol in the unit for a second year.

If you have any queries about placements, please contact Katrina Murphy, Graduate Diploma in Counselling & Human Services Placement Co-ordinator by phone on 9479 5460, or email: K.Murphy@latrobe.edu.au