

Student Placement Update – 27th March 2020

Dear students,

We would like to thank you for your patience during this challenging and evolving situation.

Following are some general guidelines relating to student placements. Please note that these guidelines and information are current as at today's date and may change.

Further below you will find **Frequently Asked Questions** regarding placements that are specific to your discipline/course. Please ensure you read **all** the information.

General guidelines:

- If your placement is suspended or cancelled, please ensure you advise the Placements Team and relevant Discipline staff
- If you are concerned and would like to discuss or discontinue your placement, please contact the Placements Team
- If your agency goes into lockdown, confirm with your agency when you will be able to return and continue your placement (if applicable)
- If your agency has opportunities for you to continue your placement from home, please contact the Placements Team
- Please ensure your placement hours are recorded in Sonia and signed off by your supervisor
- Please continue to attend your supervision classes on-line
- For students who have not completed their placement, you will be assigned a 'results pending' grade at the end of the trimester (if applicable)
- ACAP anticipates that students will be able to continue/complete their placement in Trimester 2 (if applicable)
- ACAP will continue to liaise with agencies and ensure you are kept informed of any updates
- Please refer to the discipline specific information below and contact ACAP if you have any concerns or additional questions.

Thank you,

The Placements Team

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

What do I do if my agency is closed or my placement has been 'put on hold' due to the current COVID-19 situation?

If you are unable to attend placement at the agency due to closure or any other concerns, you can complete tasks remotely (from home if you have an appropriate environment & equipment) to fulfill your placement hour requirements and learning objectives.

The first preference would be for you to undertake **tasks determined & assigned by the agency**. You should discuss with your agency task supervisor to:

- Confirm working from home arrangements, how long it will temporarily be & when to review the arrangement
- Confirm the specific tasks and trainings, what access/equipment is required, how your team will communicate and how supervision works
- Follow the instructions of the agency task supervisor & Inform your ALP to confirm.

Please ensure that you have advised and been given approval by ACAP for completion of any placement work to be completed from remotely.

What if my agency is unable to offer any tasks for me to complete off-site/remotely?

If your agency cannot offer sufficient tasks to complete remotely, the Discipline of Social Work can provide **alternative placement tasks**. These tasks are designed to address short-term field placement disruptions.

Alternative placement tasks are meant as a supplement to the placement experience and not to replace agency-based learning entirely. You must email your ALP and agency task supervisor in advance to confirm that you need to undertake alternative placement tasks due to placement disruptions.

What are the types of tasks that I can complete?

You must complete tasks that are either pre-approved by your agency task supervisor or from ACAP's following pre-approved alternative task list.

You will not receive credit for any activities that are not pre-approved.

Pre-approved alternative task list

Option 1 - Discussion paper on the COVID-19 pandemic's impact within agency context (40 hours)

Requirement: academic report of **2500-3000 words** with at least 10 academic references

Research, identify, and complete a discussion paper on the COVID-19 pandemic's impact within your placement context.

- How are your agency's operations, client groups and services impacted?
- What has your agency done to continue to meet the needs of the client groups?
- What services have been disrupted/suspended and what have been prioritised?
- Do discrimination and marginalisation complicate service delivery within the current climate? If so, how?
- How could you work to further support social, economic and environmental justice within the agency setting?

Option 2 - Media learning portfolio (8 hours)

Select three (3) media materials (TED talks, podcasts, and/or perspective, commentary and opinion articles) related to your agency's practice context.

Document the links to the materials, write a summary of the content and briefly discuss how we can apply the learning to your placement practice at the agency (up to 500 words on each source).

Note: you can complete this task multiple times if you are interested.

Option 3 - Reflection report and service recommendation (40 hours)

Requirement: academic report of **2500-3000 words** with at least 10 academic references

Identify the unique cultural composition of the client population served by the agency. Reflect on how your own intersecting identities impact your work and relationships within the agency and with client/community groups being served.

- How will you work effectively with individuals or groups you might over identify with?
- How will you work effectively with individuals or groups you may not identify with at all?
- How does your agency meet the needs of the client population?
- How can the agency's services/approach could be improved?

Option 4 – Mock job application portfolio (8 hours)

Identify a social work related role within your placement agency or in another organisation that that you may be interested in in your future career.

Obtain and review the position description or duty statement related to this role. Prepare a mock job application portfolio including a cover letter, a response to selection criteria and an updated CV. Share the mock application portfolio with your agency task supervisor, external social work supervisor and/or ALP for advice. Organise and attend the mock interview based on this mock application if possible.

Do these alternative placement tasks meet AASW requirements?

Yes. The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) allows alternative arrangements if placements are disrupted in response to exceptional circumstances. This flexible approach has also been endorsed by the Australian tertiary education regulatory authorities, ASQA and TEQSA.

Are there any specific requirements for me to be able to complete tasks remotely and count the hours as part of my placement?

When completing agency or alternative tasks remotely, you are expected to:

- Consistently demonstrate appropriate and timely use of email and professional communication during uncertain times.
- In collaboration with your agency task supervisor and/or ALP, develop a detailed work plan, including due dates, for written tasks to be submitted to your agency task supervisor and/or ALP while completing hours remotely.
- Continue to attend the Field Education seminars and group supervision sessions online.
- Complete all required placement documentation (e.g. mid placement report, final placement report, critical reflection) as usual.

Am I still required to log my placement hours in Sonia?

Yes. You must log the hours related to alternative tasks on SONIA. You should include the specific date and hours for each activity and details of the activities in the comments section, so that your agency task supervisor or ALP can approve the hours accordingly and evaluate your placement progression.

Who do I contact when I have completed the alternative placement task?

You must notify your agency task supervisor or ALP via email that the written task is ready for review. Once the written work is deemed satisfactory, your agency task supervisor or ALP can provide feedback via email and approve the hours. You need to upload a copy of your completed written tasks to *Documents in SONIA* for records.

If the placement disruption continues and you are unable to resume placement at the agency, the Discipline of Social Work will determine the most appropriate response to support you in successfully completing your field placement requirements. Support plans are assessed and determined on a case-by-case basis and do not apply to all students. Ensure you contact the Field Education Coordinator to discuss.

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Placements Team:

SOCIAL WORK	
Frankie Zhang, Caroline Willett, Anu Sasi	fieldeducation@acap.edu.au

COUNSELLING STUDENTS

What do I do if my placement has been 'put on hold' or is cancelled due to the COVID-19 situation?

Advise the Placement Team ASAP.

ACAP is liaising with the various accrediting agencies to discuss alternative placement practices that can be included as part of your placement hours.

ACAP is also providing students with the opportunity to complete alternative placement tasks as part of their general placement hours (only).

What if my agency has opportunities for me to continue my placement 'working from home' e.g. online counselling?

If your agency has the capability to enable you to continue your placement 'working from home' e.g. online counselling, please advise the Placements Team ASAP.

Are there any strict conditions that must be met for me to be able to continue my placement 'working from home' and undertake 'online counselling'?

Yes. If you are able to continue your placement 'working from home', the following conditions must be met:

1. Students must have written approval from ACAP
2. Students must have the necessary equipment for online counselling (or be provided the equipment by the agency)
3. Students must follow all guidelines provided by the agency and agency supervisor
4. Students are only able to work during the agency's normal operating hours
5. Clients must be screened prior to ensure suitability for online and/or telephone counselling
6. Students must ensure confidentiality for online and/or telephone counselling – if this is not possible, students cannot work from home
5. Students must keep detailed records of placement activities and add to the timesheets in Sonia
6. Students to ensure they have emergency contact details of:
 - a) An ACAP staff member
 - b) An agency staff member
7. Students to ensure they de-brief with their supervisor as required (daily if possible)

Please note that ACAP does not accept any responsibility for students equipment if continuing their placement from home.

Is it important that I keep a record of my placement hours?

Yes. Please ensure that all details of your placement are recorded in Sonia timesheets **and** signed off by your supervisor. This should be completed weekly, or if possible, daily.

How do I record the online counselling hours?

If you are able to carry out online counselling, either at home or at the placement agency, you can include those hours as part of your 40 hours of counselling. An additional 'Counselling (online)' option has been added to the Sonia timesheet 'Activity' drop down selection to accommodate this.

Are there any guidelines for online video conferencing counselling?

Yes. The student counsellor and client must both be in a secure space that guarantees confidentiality for the client.

Do I still have to continue to attend the online supervision classes even though my placement has been 'put on hold'?

Yes. Students are required to continue attending online clinical supervision classes.

Please note following essential information regarding online supervision:

- The emphasis is that the online supervision class is replacing a face-to-face class, therefore anything that applies to a physical presence in a classroom must be practiced online (being on time and prepared);
- Students are to be fully “present” with cameras on for the duration of the class. If they need to be switched off for any reason during a session, the student must let the supervisor know in advance;
- Complete privacy with no interruptions for the full session is required (e.g. others should not be in the background or overhearing the supervision session).
- Confidentiality, respect for each other (which involves use of appropriate language and giving each other time to speak without being interrupted) and feedback are to be professionally managed;
- Be open and non-defensive (which means being able to listen to feedback without getting upset);
- Students are not to work on anything else during the session. Full attention is required. Therefore, mobile phones and other devices must be put away. If mobile phones are to be left on for urgent reasons, they need to let the supervisor and group know in advance.

Does my mid-placement review still have to be completed?

Yes. If the Mid-Placement Review can take place via video/telephone conferencing, it can go ahead as planned.

Will I be able to continue my placement when the agency reopens?

ACAP will continue to liaise with the agency to determine when you are able to return to the agency and continue your placement.

I am concerned about attending placement given the current situation, can I please request to put my placement on hold until things get better?

Yes. If you are concerned about your health and wellbeing during this time, please contact the Placements Team ASAP.

I am concerned that I will not be able to complete my placement hours in time to graduate. Is there anything I can do?

This is an evolving situation which is changing daily. If your agency is able to provide opportunities for you to work from home, please contact the Placements Team to discuss.

What does PACFA (Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia) say about the current situation and placement?

Should students be unable to complete the required 40 hours of face to face client contact and 10 hours of supervision due to the coronavirus emergency, client hours and supervision may be completed by video conference (not telephone). The full practice placement must be completed, allowing for this alternative medium, in order to graduate.

If graduates have completed some or all of their supervised client contact via video conference and wish to apply for PACFA Provisional membership, face to face client hours must be completed and logged after graduating to make up for the client hours completed by video conference during training. This is a membership requirement rather than an accreditation requirement.

For example, if 30 of the required 40 client hours are completed via video conference, 30 hours of face to face counselling would need to be completed and logged prior to applying for PACFA Provisional membership. While completing these face to face client hours, all graduates may apply for PACFA Affiliate membership.

This means that students:

- Will still be able to complete the placement and supervision unit and graduate with the inclusion of online hours
- Will need to provide evidence of 40 hours of face to face counselling when applying for PACFA 'provisional' membership status.

What does ACA (Australian Counselling Association) say about the current situation and placement?

We have had a few inquiries about our stance on Student placements amid the Coronavirus outbreak and would like to clarify the following:

Until otherwise informed, ACA defines face to face training, supervision, and placement hours as including webcam or similar web-based platforms where the student can interact with the client/supervisor in real-time. Training providers will need to have a clear and succinct policy on how any crisis is to be handled and resolved should one occur during a web-based interaction between a student and client.

This means that students can count online counselling via video conferencing as part of the face to face hours, if you have been given authorisation from your placement agency. You need to be mindful of the ethical compliance issues with counselling online from home.

Please refer to the following guidelines as well as your agency's guidelines:

<https://www.theaca.net.au/documents/Guidelines%20for%20online%20counselling%20and%20psychotherapy.pdf>

What are some of the things that I can complete that can be counted towards the 160 hours general counselling hours?

To support students, we have approval to implement a range of activities enabling them to continue the accumulation of general counselling hours. This includes telephone counselling and completion of research projects.

Following are some research project suggestions:

- Researching online counselling portfolio of resources - How does this differ from face-to-face? What do you need to know and consider? What does PACFA say? What does ACA say?
- Supportive connections online / by phone portfolio of resources
- Counselling termination in times of uncertainty portfolio of resources
- Self-care in times of uncertainty; Mental health and wellbeing portfolio of resources
- Professional self-care in the rapidly evolving global COVID-19 situation portfolio of resources
- Transference and countertransference in the rapidly evolving global COVID-19 situation portfolio of resources

Students are also able to submit a proposal of their own project that they would like to complete e.g. 'Liaising with the placement agency to negotiate a project that is relevant to the agency and its clientele'.

If you would like to complete one of these projects or propose one of your own, please email:

Dr. Belinda Barnes - Belinda.Barnes@acap.edu.au

Please note the following parameters:

- Students must get written approval from Dr Belinda Barnes to complete a research project
- Students must advise their clinical supervisor that they are completing a research project
- Students discuss this project in their clinical supervision classes. If students are not on placement and seeing clients, they must use the research project to inform the supervision discussions and to help contribute to the Professional Reflective Portfolio
- Students complete their timesheet in Sonia with these details
- Students write a minimum 1000 word reflection on what they learned from doing the project, and submit this in one of their Professional Reflective Blogs on the class space and incorporate this reflection in their Professional Reflective Portfolio which is submitted via Moodle in the class space by Week 13 (as per the unit outline)

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Placements Team:

COUNSELLING		
Andrew Hadley	Sydney	Studentplacementsyd@acap.edu.au
Rosemary Parker	Melbourne	Studentplacementmelb@acap.edu.au
Prosper Nzisabira	Brisbane	Studentplacementbris@acap.edu.au
Rosalee Cearns	Adelaide	Studentplacementadel@acap.edu.au
Jennifer Stack	Perth	Studentplacementperth@acap.edu.au

VET STUDENTS

What do I do if my placement has been ‘put on hold’ or is cancelled?

Please advise the Placement Team ASAP.

What if my agency has opportunities for me to continue my placement ‘working from home’?

If your agency has the capability to enable you to continue your placement ‘working from home’, please let the Placements Team ASAP.

Is it important that I keep a record of my hours?

Yes. Please ensure that all details of your placement are recorded in your log, or in Sonia timesheets if you started placement in Trimester 1 2020 and signed off by your supervisor. This should be completed weekly, or if possible, daily.

Will I be able to continue my placement when the agency reopens?

ACAP will continue to liaise with the agency to determine when you are able to return to the agency.

I am concerned about attending placement given the current situation, can I please request to put my placement on hold until things get better?

Yes. If you are concerned, please contact the Placements Team ASAP.

I am concerned that I will not be able to complete my placement hours in time to graduate. Is there anything I can do?

This is an evolving situation which is changing daily. If your agency is able to provide opportunities for you to work from home, please contact the Placements Team to discuss.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Placements Team

VET	
Gwen Daly, Anu Sasi, Tania Dionisio	VETplacement@acap.edu.au