

Practice Learning & Placement Approval Audit (Procedures and Guidance)

Appendix A:

Health and Safety of Student Placements - Guidance Note B

Appendix B:

Risk Assessment Matrix

Social Work Placement Learning Information guidance is available from:

Sheffield Hallam University, Social Work Social Care and Community Studies placement learning information website <https://www.shu.ac.uk/health-social-placements/profession-information/social-work-social-care-and-community-studies>

BA, MA and LDSW (LD) Placements with Sheffield Hallam University

To be read in conjunction with the Practice Learning & Placement Approval Audit

Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)

The PCF has nine domains that are used as a holistic assessment mechanism for under and post graduate social workers. The capabilities should be seen as interdependent, not separate. As they interact in professional practice, so there are no overlaps between the capabilities within the domains and many issues will be relevant to more than one domain.

The link below provides a comprehensive list of the PCF and links to practice.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/professional-development/professional-capabilities-framework-pcf/the-pcf>

Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) for social work

The PEPS set out the standards for practice educators at two stages, commensurate with the different levels of complexity and responsibility in teaching, assessing and supervising social work degree students.

These standards were refreshed by BASW in 2022, see link below.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/social-work-training/practice-educator-professional-standards-peps>

These are minimum expectations. Employers and HEIs are free to develop requirements at a higher level individually or collaboratively.

Staged approach

The PEPS outline two stages of progression for practice educators:

PEPS 1

Practice educators at this stage will be able to supervise, teach and assess social work degree students **up to but not including the final assessment prior to qualification**. At this stage they **may contribute to the last placement but not take full responsibility for assessment** or act as the practice educator they can be the day-to-day practice supervisor.

PEPS 2

Practice educators at this stage will be able to supervise, teach and assess social work degree students **up to and including the last placement**. In effect, these practice educators will have the authority and capability to recommend, on the basis of appropriate evidence, that social work students are fit to practise at the point of qualification.

All practice educators in training should be supported by a PEPS2 practice educator/mentor. With these arrangements in place, a practice educator in training can take responsibility for a student social worker in a placement - including a final year student.

On-site practice supervisors

SWE RSWs

On-site practice supervisors who are RSWs may not have reached PEPS1 proficiency to support and supervise the day-to-day work of a social work student. It is recommended that they should be working towards the PEPS1 learning outcomes (*as covered in the university's five days course Introduction to Practice Education*) and be supported by their line manager and a PEPS 2 PE/mentor. It is for the line manager to ensure that a practice supervisor has the professional capability to provide day-to-day practice supervision of social work students.

If an RSW meets the stage 1 learning outcomes and the assessment requirements needed by a PE, then they may become a stage 1 PE.

Non-RSWs

Practice supervisors who are not RSWs may still use the learning outcomes (*as covered in the university's five days course Introduction to Practice Education*) as a development framework, but they will not be eligible for PEPS 1 status.

For all placements, if the practice supervisor is not a RSW then the PE (on-site or off-site) must be a RSW at PEPS 2.

Professional Capability Framework

Readiness for Practice Capabilities

By the point of assessment of readiness for direct practice (prior to first placement), students should demonstrate basic communication skills, ability to engage with users, capacity to work as a member of an organisation, willingness to learn from feedback and supervision, and demonstrate basic social work values, knowledge and skills in order to be able to make effective use of first practice placement.

End of First Placement Level Capabilities

By the end of the first placement students should demonstrate effective use of knowledge, skills and commitment to core values in SW in a given setting in predominantly less complex situations, with supervision and support. They will have demonstrated capacity to work with people and situations where there may not be simple clear-cut solutions.

Qualifying Social Worker Level Capabilities

By the end of last placement/ the completion of qualifying programmes newly qualified social workers should have demonstrated the Knowledge, Skills and Values to work with a range of user groups, and the ability to undertake a range of tasks at a foundation level, the capacity to work with more complex situations; they should be able to work more autonomously, whilst recognising that the final decision will still rest with their supervisor; they will seek appropriate support and supervision.

Assessment progression

An important part of how the PCF will be used is the assessment of progression from one career stage to another. Assessment will be undertaken by a range of organisations, in different ways, at different thresholds. It is important that all such assessments should be made holistically within each capability: whilst there will be several expectations specified within each capability at a given level, these should not be evaluated in isolation from each other. The essence of the professional capabilities framework is to support judgments about readiness to progress in a holistic way for each capability. This represents a different conceptual approach to the frameworks that have been used in social work previously, many of which have focussed on defining competencies at a given level, each one of which must be evidenced. The concerns articulated about those approaches suggest that judgements about overall capability may get lost where there is a micro focus on competence. It is anticipated that some exemplars for assessing the capabilities at different levels will be developed.

Progression between levels is characterised by development in terms of:

- Level of confidence, underpinned by practice experience, reflection and deepening understanding
- The increasing ability to work independently and to collaborate on equal terms with members of other professions
- The quality of the judgments made, and the level of ability to explain and justify them
- Efficacy of the work undertaken and the outcomes achieved, including opportunities for preventive work
- The ability to take initiative, form constructive alliances and to act as a change agent
- The ability to engage effectively with situations of increasing complexity and challenge, for example those with:
 - multi-agency input
 - complex family / organisational dynamics
 - serious hostility and conflicts of interest
 - multiple problems / disadvantages
 - multiple / significant risk factors
 - need to take into account the public interest
- The appropriate use of authority and challenge
- The ability and commitment to educate and provide professional supervision to others
- Demonstration of leadership, management and research.

Appendix A: Health and Safety of Student Placements

Guidance Note B

GUIDANCE ON ASSESSING PLACEMENT HEALTH AND SAFETY RISKS

Part 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Student placement will require two risks assessments:

a) **ASSESSMENT BY THE PLACEMENT PROVIDER OF THE IMPACT OF THE WORK ACTIVITY ON THE STUDENT.**

This is a legal obligation on the part of the placement provider, although the University will be requesting confirmation of this through the questionnaire sent to providers in the build up to reaching an agreement about the arrangements. In all cases the University will be reliant upon the provider's competence to ensure this assessment is undertaken properly. It will however be appropriate for the Placement Organiser (PO) to check these assessments have taken place, and to factor in the significance of the work-related risks into an overall assessment (described in 1.1 b).

In certain circumstances a PO may choose to prevent a placement where there are legitimate concerns over the competence of the Placement Provider to undertake suitable and sufficient assessments (University Health and Safety Service will be available to support PO's around these decisions).

b) **ASSESSMENT BY THE UNIVERSITY (E.G. THE PLACEMENT ORGANISER) OF THE OVERALL RISKS FROM THE PLACEMENT ON THE STUDENT**

Including recognition of the work-related risks (to the extent to which these are understood by the University), but extended to consider other issues which fall within the duty of care owed by the University toward the student whilst on placement. These other considerations include:

- Travel and transport risks
- Location and/or regional factors (particularly relevant to international placements, or relating to areas in the UK where security or other risks could be considered high)
- Health factors - either local risks or special medical considerations for a specific student
- Lone or remote working
- Disabled students or other special needs

- 1.2 This guidance concentrates on item 1.1 b), and includes a Reference Matrix (see Part 2) which allocates a nominal level of risk (colour coded red, amber and green), and a checklist to serve as a record of the key considerations (see Part 3).
- 1.3 In all cases student placement must be subject to these risk assessments, although the **formality of the assessment is determined by the nature and significance of the risks**. Low risk activity, undertaken in the UK, and not presenting any significant security, safety, or health risks may be undertaken with an informal unrecorded assessment. Placements where the risks cannot be dismissed as trivial will justify formality, and the highest risks circumstances, the risk assessment exercise should be fully documented.
- 1.4 **There is no expectation that students cannot undertake placements where the risks are high**, but clearly in such circumstances the expectation regarding the quality of assessment and risk control measures must reflect the high risks. In such cases, the assessments and controls must be formal and fully documented.

Appendix B: Risk Assessment Reference Matrix

RISK FACTOR GUIDANCE

Please use this table for reference when profiling the risks associated with the student(s) placement

RISK	WORK RELATED FACTORS	TRAVEL & TRANSPORTATION FACTORS	LOCATION AND/OR REGIONAL FACTORS	HEALTH FACTORS
<p>HIGH RISK</p> <p><i>Examples of situations which may contribute to a placement being</i></p> <p>HIGH RISK</p>	<p>Working directly with hazards that could cause serious injury or death.</p> <p>Examples: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction site work (not admin or management roles). Operation of hazardous machinery. Laboratory work with hazardous chemicals. Farm work. Working directly with dangerous animals. Dangerous activities requiring a high level of competence, skill or specialist qualifications (e.g. diving, rope access work, firefighting) 	<p>Difficult, lengthy or complex travel to reach the placement from the UK, involving long-haul flying plus overland or ship travel, where student is not accompanied</p> <p>Placement role likely to require significant travel in or to remote locations, without escort</p> <p>Placement likely to require significant travel where transport infrastructure is known or expected to be poor</p> <p>Student required to drive as part of placement, <u>where the traffic flow is opposite what the student is used to</u> (e.g. driving on the right, for a British student)</p> <p>NOTE: These risks are reduced considerably if the student is familiar with the host country and/or the language</p>	<p>Civil unrest, war, rioting or other known conflict in area, region or country close to the placement location</p> <p>In all relevant cases, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office website should be consulted and used as a benchmark to aid in decision making</p> <p>Known outbreak of serious disease in immediate region. E.g. Ebola outbreak in some West African countries.</p> <p>Medical and emergency service infrastructure poor or likely to be unavailable quickly or locally</p> <p>Communication likely to be difficult or impossible</p>	<p>The student has known chronic health factors which may cause episodes of illness (e.g. epilepsy, diabetes)</p> <p>The student has known personal factors (e.g. health, disability, linguistic or cultural) which may foreseeably increase the risks at work, even with adjustments</p> <p>The student's knowledge, understanding, and skills are known or suspected to be below the standard required for the type of work expected</p>
<p>MEDIUM RISK</p> <p><i>Examples of situations which may contribute to a placement being</i></p> <p>MEDIUM RISK</p>	<p>Proximity to the type of hazards listed above - but <u>not</u> directly working with them.</p> <p>Examples: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on construction sites (e.g. in admin or managerial roles) Work where there is foreseeably an increased potential for crime or violence (e.g. work with drug abusers, psychiatric patients, young offenders) Photography in urban areas at night Placement likely to involve significant lone working 	<p>Student required to drive as part of the placement</p> <p>Student likely to have to commute late at night (e.g. bar work or similar)</p>	<p>Placements in countries where cultural, linguistic or religious expectations are strict and differ significantly from what the student may be used to, and where transgressions may cause serious offence and/or attract sanction or punishment.</p> <p>Placements in 'undeveloped' countries or regions, or in wilderness or rural areas where infrastructure and healthcare access is likely to be poor</p>	<p>The student has personal factors (e.g. health, disability, pregnancy, linguistic or cultural) which may require specific adjustments or support during work or in social interactions at work</p>
<p>LOW RISK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office or shop working Schools, colleges, medical treatment centres Daytime community activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant travel risks Student not required to drive as part of the placement 	<p>Placements in the UK or abroad where there are no foreseeable regional or local risks</p>	<p>No known health, disability or other individual risk factors</p>