



# IRISH ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL CARE EDUCATION

## Social Care Student Practice Placement Policies<sup>1,4</sup>

### PREAMBLE:

The student practice placement is a key component of programmes leading to a professional social care qualification. The policies below will guide Social Care educators and complement the HETAC social care work award standards (2010)<sup>2</sup>. They are statements of best practice and do not supersede Institute/College Examination Regulations.

### STAFFING:

It is the responsibility of the Institute/College to ensure it can support the numbers of social care students which are recruited by providing adequate resources to support the professional practice dimension of the programme. This includes allocation of appropriately qualified staff for placement preparation, co-ordination, visiting and reviewing. This work should be undertaken by lecturers familiar with the requirements of professional social care practice. Administrative assistance may be useful in some of the associated tasks.

### PRIOR TO PLACEMENT:

A student is not automatically entitled to undertake placement by virtue of commencing a social care programme. Student preparation for placement should be assessed before he/she is permitted to commence. This preparation should include:

- Classes on Placement Preparation with mandatory attendance. The student's understanding of what is entailed in Placement should be assessed as satisfactory before commencing placement.

- Satisfactory participation in Professional Practice modules.

• A mandatory portfolio of evidence showing the acquisition of skills and knowledge, in order to be able to approach the placement with confidence and a certain level of competence. This portfolio can be developed as part of the assessment for Professional Practice modules<sup>3</sup>. Such a portfolio might include evidence of:

- Capacity to work as part of a group
- Ability to work respectfully with others
- Capacity to work pro-actively with people of different age, gender, religion, race, etc.
- Ability to identify own learning gaps and goals, together with strengths
- Ability to accept constructive criticism
- Capacity to work under direction and on own initiative
- Ability to listen actively and respectfully
- Evidence of reflective thinking in learning diary and/or at interview
- Participation in class activities, and satisfactory attendance and punctuality

Students who have not met these criteria, or whose portfolio is not reflecting their actual performance, would be required to address the outstanding issues before being considered for placement.

### STUDENT SELF-DISCLOSURE:

Appropriate self-disclosure of difficulties which may impact on the placement should be expected and encouraged, first to college staff and if necessary to the placement supervisor.

1. Approved at Irish Association of Social Care Educators meeting 7th October 2011  
2. [http://www.hetac.ie/docs/B.2.9-5.5\\_Awards\\_Standards\\_Social\\_Care\\_Work\\_2010.pdf](http://www.hetac.ie/docs/B.2.9-5.5_Awards_Standards_Social_Care_Work_2010.pdf)  
3. Alternative arrangements may be more appropriate in Colleges which operate a practice placement in Year 1.  
4. Approved at Social Care Ireland Meeting 25 January 2012.

## **FITNESS FOR PRACTICE PLACEMENT:**

Where reservations exist regarding a student's fitness to commence practice placement, this should be discussed by the Course Board in a clear and unequivocal manner, documenting the evidence for such reservations (e.g. erratic behaviour, persistent lateness, mood swings interfering with college work, inappropriate disclosures or boundaries). The Course Board then formulates the recommendation on whether or not the placement should be facilitated at this time, or agrees to reconsider the situation if progress can be demonstrated on the presenting problem in a given timescale.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT:**

In order to reach a decision on Fitness for Practice Placement, an assessment of risk should be carried out. This shall be the responsibility of the College and may also involve the placement agency, having in mind both the student and service users. If there is deemed to be a serious risk, this is communicated to the student who is also advised on how best to address the issues in question e.g. work with a counsellor, work on specific tasks or re-take Placement Preparation.

## **SUITABILITY OF SOCIAL CARE AGENCIES AS SITES FOR LEARNING:**

Agencies suitable for student placement are characterised by

- qualified social care staff who have completed the IASCE Supervisors' Training Course
- willingness to meet with student prior to placement and discuss the work of the service and the student's learning needs
- a student induction programme
- willingness to allow students engage in 'real work' as appropriate to their level of expertise
- willingness to meet regularly with students for supervision, on a weekly basis if placement is full time, with a focus on constructive feedback
- planning to overcome practice weakness is part of supervision.
- being proactive in contacting college personnel if the student is not making changes to practice as agreed in supervision

## **FAILING PLACEMENT:**

The College Tutor can remove a student at any

stage if there are serious concerns regarding his/her ability to learn or to cope with the demands in the placement setting, or if his/her behaviour is having a negative effect on the work of the agency. Normal college appeals processes can be utilised by students if so desired. A plan should be put in place to address the learning deficits which were observed on placement. Prior to a new placement, agreed goals must be achieved to demonstrate that the student is deemed ready to undertake a second placement.

## **REPEATING PLACEMENT:**

Only one repeat placement should be facilitated, due to potential impact on vulnerable service users. This policy should be ratified by each Institute's/College's Academic Council and, where necessary, a derogation sought from Examination Regulations. Repeat placements should take place in an agency where the supervisor is a qualified and experienced social care worker and, ideally, has completed the IASCE Supervisors' Training course. A repeat placement should only take place at a time when support and monitoring from lecturing staff is available.

## **SUPERVISORS' REPORTS:**

should be made available to the next supervisor with the consent of the student and the author to facilitate the development of learning goals for second and subsequent placements.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**

All IASCE member colleges can ensure students sign up to these IASCE Placement policies. Each IASCE member college can also use the Practice Placement Manual and Supervisors' Training Course, together with established practices regarding Practice Placement Contracts, with the aim of ensuring that Social Care Practice Placements reach and stay at the highest standards in all our Institutes/Colleges.

