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Practicum, Field and Clinical Placements

Purpose

This section details the:

- course information booklet and [assessment](#) requirements for practicum, field and clinical placements
- legislative obligations and processes prescribed by Practice Acts regarding concerns about medical fitness for placement
- procedures regarding concerns about suitability for placement
- procedures for managing unsatisfactory progress, misconduct on placement, unprofessional conduct on placement, and loss of student registration.

Relevant to

All courses and course components that are identified as a placement, and are offered as part of:

- an undergraduate or postgraduate coursework program
- single and cross-institutional courses
- Open Universities Australia (OUA) units delivered by UniSA

This section applies to all disciplines covered by extant Practice Acts. It will also apply to any other disciplines for which Practice Acts are subsequently introduced.

Cross-references

- Occupational Therapy Practice Act 2005
- Physiotherapy Practice Act 2005
- Podiatry Practice Act 2005
- Pharmacy Practice Act 2007
- Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000
- Statute 7: Student misconduct, University of South Australia Statutes
- Code of Ethical Conduct
- Code of good practice: Relationships between staff and students
- C-7: Students with disabilities
- A-46: Confidentiality of student's personal information
- A-49: Postgraduate Coursework Degrees with a significant research component

4.1 General administrative requirements

- 4.1.1 Placements are an important part of teaching and learning in professional awards. They are designed in consultation with industry and business, and are facilitated by schools and divisions on behalf of students.
- 4.1.2 A placement may be part of a course, or the whole of a course, as approved by Academic Board.
- 4.1.3 Placements are usually supervised by qualified professionals working in the field and may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. a practicum
 - b. fieldwork
 - c. a clinical placement

- d. an industry guided simulation
 - e. an industry project
- 4.1.4 The [University](#) has a responsibility to ensure that all students who are required to undertake a placement have the capacity to behave appropriately, without endangering themselves or others, or having a detrimental impact on the placement environment or the University.
- 4.1.5 Students on placement are required to:
- a. adhere to relevant professional codes of ethics
 - b. demonstrate a high standard of honesty, integrity and social responsibility
 - c. conduct themselves in a manner that reflects well on the University.
- 4.1.6 Students may be obliged to meet certain requirements prior to placement such as police checks, mandatory reporting training, immunisation and first aid certification. Details of such requirements must be included in the course and/or program information available to students prior to enrolling, as well as course information booklets, placement websites and other relevant information sources.
- 4.1.7 At least two weeks prior to the commencement of a placement, the [Course Coordinator](#) is responsible for providing each student with written details of the placement, including:
- a. the assessment requirements of the placement and where applicable, of the course
 - b. the conditions under which students will be assigned to a placement
 - c. the location of the placement and where possible, the name of the supervisor to whom the student will report
 - d. the professional and workplace standards of the placement provider. This may include requirements in relation to dress, punctuality, reporting sick leave, occupational health and safety, or other requirements such as immunisation
 - e. the process to be followed if the student has concerns about issues such as exploitation, harassment or unfair treatment during the placement
- 4.1.8 Variations to assessment due to special circumstances or disability will be in accordance with Section 3 of this Manual and /or University policy C-7: [Students with disabilities](#).

4.2 Medical fitness under current Practice Acts

- 4.2.1 Legislative reporting obligations arising under the relevant Practice Acts apply to concerns about the medical fitness of students on placement in the following academic disciplines:
- a. Occupational Therapy
 - b. Physiotherapy
 - c. Podiatry
 - d. Pharmacy, and
 - e. any other discipline for which Practice Acts with reporting obligations are introduced
- 4.2.2 These reporting obligations apply to any University staff member who is also a health professional, and who is involved in the teaching and /or supervision of students on placement.

- 4.2.3 Concerns about medical fitness may arise in relation to:
- a. a physical or mental impairment
 - b. a serious communicable disease or infection
 - c. a propensity for violence, or
 - d. any other condition or attribute
- which may foreseeably undermine the student's capacity to take part in the placement or carry out their placement duties without the risk of harm or injury to self, persons in the care of the placement provider, the placement provider, or a third party.
- 4.2.4 The Practice Acts require that any University staff member who is also a health professional and who is of the opinion that a student is, or may be, medically unfit to participate in a placement must submit a written report to the relevant registration board setting out their reasons for that opinion, and any other information required by the regulations.
- 4.2.5 A University staff member who reports their concern about medical fitness to the registration board must at the same time report the matter to the Head of School.
- 4.2.6 The Head of School and the relevant [Program Director](#) will discuss the concern about medical fitness with the student. The student must be advised that:
- a. the ultimate decision regarding medical fitness will be made by the registration board, not the University.
 - b. the student will be expected to comply with the registration board's decision
 - c. the Practice Acts provide for appeal against the decision of the registration board, and
 - d. continuing enrolment may be contingent upon the student's acceptance of conditions imposed by the relevant board after any appeal has been heard.
- 4.2.7 All reports of concerns about medical fitness must be forwarded to Campus Central to be retained on the student's file, with a copy to the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic.

4.3 Suitability for placement

- 4.3.1 In addition to the legislative reporting obligations described above, any concern about the suitability of a student for placement, including concerns about medical fitness described above, may be raised by a fellow student, a peer, an academic or professional staff member, or anyone outside the University.
- 4.3.2 Any report of concern about the suitability of a student for placement must be made confidentially to the Head of School in the first instance. The Head of School will review the concern and determine whether further action should be taken.
- 4.3.3 If the Head of School determines that no further action will be taken on the grounds that the report is frivolous, vexatious, or has no merit, the notifier will be informed of this outcome in writing.
- 4.3.4 If the Head of School determines that the concern merits further investigation, the Head of School must notify the student in writing that they are required to provide evidence of suitability for placement including, where appropriate, evidence of medical fitness.

- 4.3.5 Where the student is unable or unwilling to provide evidence of suitability for placement, or where the evidence provided does not adequately address the concerns raised, the Head of School, following discussion with the Program Director and/or the student, may decide to:
- a. allow the placement to proceed, subject to an agreed variation in accordance with University policy C-7: *Students with disabilities*, or
 - b. arrange for the student to complete an alternative placement, or
 - c. advise the student that medical evidence is mandatory before the student can be allowed to proceed with the placement, or
 - d. request advice from the suitability advisory panel (see clause 4.4).
- 4.3.6 All reports of concerns about suitability for placement must be forwarded to Campus Central to be retained on the student's file, with a copy to the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic.

4.4 Suitability Advisory Panel

- 4.4.1 The suitability advisory panel will be convened on an 'as needs' basis by the Head of School to independently consider concerns about the suitability of a student for placement.
- 4.4.2 The panel will act in accordance with the prescribed terms of reference which are to:
- a. receive a report of concern, via the process described above
 - b. consider the report and any accompanying evidence, calling for additional information, which may include legal and medical opinion, as required
 - c. prepare a written report summarising their decision
 - d. treat all information as strictly confidential, as required under the Privacy Act.
- 4.4.3 The membership of the suitability advisory panel will comprise:
- a. Head of School (Chair)
 - b. Deputy Director, Student and Academic Services
 - c. Senior Disability Adviser, Learning and Teaching Unit
(The role of the Senior Disability Adviser is limited to the provision of advice regarding services and adjustments which can be provided to allow the student to safely undertake or continue with the placement)
 - d. Director: Council Services and Chancellery
- and include the attendance of:
- e. an executive officer
 - f. other staff as required (eg Program Director, Course Coordinator, placement supervisor, Coordinator: Clinical Placement Unit).
- 4.4.4 Panel members must deal with the matters before them in an unbiased manner, and in accordance with the University's *Code of Ethical Conduct* and the *Code of good practice: Relationships between staff and students*.
- 4.4.5 An impartial observer, acceptable to all parties, may be appointed at the discretion of the Chair, to oversee the procedural fairness of the suitability advisory panel's proceedings. The observer will not participate in determining the advice of the panel but will submit a report confirming procedural fairness as an addendum to the panel's report.
- 4.4.6 The Chair will provide a copy of all relevant information and documentation, in envelopes marked 'confidential', to members of the panel at least two working days before the meeting.

- 4.4.7 The panel will review the evidence in accordance with the terms of reference (see clause 4.4.2).
- 4.4.8 All copies of relevant information and documentation will be collected by the Chair at the conclusion of the meeting and destroyed.
- 4.4.9 The panel will prepare a written report summarising their decision, and the reasons for their decision.
- 4.4.10 The Chair of the panel will ensure that any relevant statutory reporting requirements are fulfilled and will notify the student in writing of the outcome of the suitability advisory panel. A copy of the correspondence must be forwarded to Campus Central to be retained on the student's file.
- 4.4.11 Where the student does not agree with the outcome of the suitability advisory panel, the student may write to the divisional Pro Vice Chancellor within five working days of being notified of the outcome, to request a review of the matter. The divisional Pro Vice Chancellor's decision on the matter is final. The student will be notified of the decision in writing, and a copy must be forwarded to Campus Central to be retained on the student's file.

4.5 Unsatisfactory performance on a placement

- 4.5.1 Unsatisfactory performance may include one or more of the following:
- a. failure to meet the assessment requirements as detailed in the course information booklet
 - b. failure to adhere to the professional standards and workplace requirements of the placement provider
 - c. incomplete or late completion of placement documentation (eg journals, case notes etc) unless an extension has been agreed to by the Course Coordinator
 - d. failure to discuss critical incidents or issues of concern with the placement supervisor or Course Coordinator.
- 4.5.2 Unsatisfactory performance on a placement may contribute to:
- a. a final fail grade in a course that is a placement, or
 - b. a fail grade for the placement component of a course.
- 4.5.3 Students may appeal the final [grade](#) in accordance with Section 8 of this Manual.

4.6 Misconduct on a placement

- 4.6.1 Where a Course Coordinator, placement supervisor or placement provider identifies a student whose:
- a. behaviour on the placement may contribute to risk for self, persons in the care of the placement provider, the placement provider, or a third party, or
 - b. behaviour may constitute misconduct under Statute 7 of the University of South Australia Statutes
 - c. actions may involve academic misconduct as described in Section 9 of this Manual.
- the student will be required meet with the Course Coordinator and/or Academic Integrity Officer. Where the student is unable to attend the meeting, this discussion may occur via email or teleconference.
- 4.6.2 Under the circumstance outlined in clause 4.6.1 above, the student may be immediately removed from the placement at the discretion of the Course Coordinator, Program Director, placement supervisor or placement provider.
- 4.6.3 The student may be assisted or represented at the meeting by:
- a. a representative of UniLife, or in the case of transnational students, a representative of the UniSA partner institution
 - b. any staff member or student of the University
- 4.6.4 If, as a result of this meeting, the Course Coordinator decides that the placement may continue, no further action will be taken.
- 4.6.5 If, as a result of this meeting, the Course Coordinator decides that the placement should be suspended and the student removed, the Course Coordinator will make a written recommendation, including reasons, to the Head of School.
- 4.6.6 The Head of School, on reviewing the Course Coordinator's recommendation and following further discussion as appropriate, may:
- a. allow the student to continue the placement, or
 - b. arrange for the student to complete an alternative placement, or
 - c. confirm the immediate removal of the student from the placement and, after consultation with the Course Coordinator, initiate an investigation into the circumstances leading to the removal of the student from placement.
- 4.6.7 Where the Head of School decides in favour of clause 4.6.6 a. or b. above, the student will be notified in writing of the Head of School's decision, and the Course Coordinator will be advised accordingly. A copy of the letter to the student must be forwarded to Campus Central to be retained on the student's file.
- 4.6.8 Where the Head of School decides in favour of clause 4.6.6 c, above, the investigation will be conducted in accordance with the procedures specified for formal inquiries in Section 9 of this Manual

4.7 Unprofessional conduct on a placement

- 4.7.1 This section applies only to programs in the following disciplines:
- a. Occupational Therapy
 - b. Physiotherapy
 - c. Podiatry
 - d. Pharmacy
- All other disciplines should refer to section 4.6 above.
- 4.7.2 Where a Course Coordinator or placement provider is of the opinion that a student has engaged in unprofessional conduct as defined under the relevant Practice Act, the University is required to make a report to the relevant registration board.
- 4.7.3 In the event that a report of unprofessional conduct is made to the board, the Course Coordinator or placement provider must also report the matter to the Head of School.
- 4.7.4 The matter will be discussed with the student by the Head of School and Program Director. The student must be advised that:
- a. the ultimate decision regarding unprofessional conduct will be made by the registration board, not the University
 - b. the student will be expected to comply with the registration board's decision
 - c. the Practice Acts provide for appeal against the decision of the registration board, and
 - d. continuing enrolment may be contingent upon the student's acceptance of conditions imposed by the relevant board after any appeal has been heard.

4.8 Loss of student registration

- 4.8.1 This clause applies only to programs in the following disciplines:
- a. Occupational Therapy
 - b. Physiotherapy
 - c. Podiatry
 - d. Pharmacy
- 4.8.2 Where a registration board decides that a student can no longer be registered with the board, the University is required under the Practice Acts to cancel that student's enrolment in the program. In such a case, there is an appeal mechanism against the removal of student registration under the relevant Practice Act. The University may also provide the student with the option to undertake another program for which registration is not required, providing a place is available and the student meets that program's entry requirements.