Social Work Field Education 1 (Advanced)

**Teaching Period:** Sem 1 2012

**Course Code:** HWSS2113

**School:** 365H Global Studies, Social Science & Planning

**Career:** Postgraduate

**Campus:** City Campus

**Learning Mode:** Workplace

**Primary Learning Mode:**

Primary learning mode is face to face through a 70 day supervised placement, preceded by a briefing in semester 1, integrative seminars on campus during placement and case study.

**Credit Points:** 36

**Teacher Guided Hours:** 36 per semester

**Learner Directed Hours:** 99 per semester

**Course Coordinator:** Judy Williams

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**Course Coordinator Email:** judy.williams@rmit.edu.au

**Course Coordinator Location:** 8.7.16

**Course Coordinator Availability:** telephone, email, by appointment and liaison visits

**Additional Staff Contact Details**

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**Pre-requisite Courses and Assumed Knowledge and Capabilities**

Previously completed undergraduate degree, 2 years work experience & completion of relevant MSW courses.

**Course Description**

Field Education 1 is a major component of the Masters of Social Work program. It is aimed at preparing students for effective beginning professional practice. Through this course, and its companion Field Education 2, students will have the opportunity to strengthen and develop their professional skills, knowledge and values within a workplace-learning environment.

In Field Education 1 there is an emphasis upon preparing students for beginning professional practice. Ordinarily, the placement will focus on direct service work with individuals, families or groups. Students are required to demonstrate an ability to effectively engage with services users, peers and
colleagues. They will also demonstrate an understanding of organizational and community contexts of practice, as well as effectively dealing with the implications these contexts have for service delivery and the ethical dilemmas that are likely to be encountered. MSW students are also expected to be able to analyse practice situations by drawing on a range of theoretical perspectives, in particular those concerning power and exclusion, and to develop appropriate responses. The Field Education course requires students to actively draw from previous knowledge and experience when determining their specific learning goals while they are on their field placements. This includes integrating previously studied material, especially in relation to social (work) theory and practice, but also prior workplace learning. The Casework, Counselling and Advocacy course also provides a structured opportunity for students to have interaction between university and agency-based learning.

Students in MSW Field Education courses will be expected to show a level of critical and creative capability, and fluency in reflective and ethical practice, that is beyond that expected of students completing the Bachelor of Social Work. On completion of Field Education 1 MSW students will be required to demonstrate a standard of practice that meets the Australian Association of Social Work practice standards.

Ideally, students will complete at least three MSW courses (including Critical Social Work and Casework, Counselling and Advocacy) before they enter placement. However, to account for a range of entry points and experience, students may be able to negotiate a more flexible pathway into Field Education 1 with the Field Co-ordinator.

Objectives/Learning Outcomes/Capability Development:

The Field Education courses (1 & 2) occupy a special and central place within the RMIT MSW program. Between them, they encompass most of the capabilities of the program that inform student experiences. Field education is weighted this way (72 credit points in total) because it provides students with opportunities to develop and integrate their professional capabilities in practice. It also allows students to demonstrate their ability to be assessed across the range of capabilities while working within at least two different workplace settings.

Both Field Education courses are linked to core courses scheduled in the MSW program. These links are important because they allow students to integrate their knowledge, skills and values into practice. Students are expected to connect their practice experiences with their classroom based learning, and vice-versa. This requires students to import academic learning (undertaken in their undergraduate courses and the current MSW course) into the field, as well as bringing their field learning in to the academy.

Ordinarily, Field Education 1 has an emphasis on direct work with service users whereas Field Education 2 usually focuses on macro level practice, mostly in areas dedicated to developing policies, conducting research or building communities. Students who follow this pathway will note that Field Education 1 links most with the courses, Critical Social Work (Social Work Theory and Practice I) Casework, Counselling and Advocacy (Social Work Theory and Practice II) and Social Work with Groups (Social Work Theory and Practice III). Critical Social Work provides the main theoretical
models and perspectives for practice while Casework, Counselling and Advocacy and Social Work with Groups extend students’ theoretical understanding of work with individuals, families and groups, and facilitates the development of direct practice skills.

In some cases students will have a broader focus for Field Education 1 (and direct practice focus for FE2); this would be negotiated with the Field Education Coordinator and would depend on relevant undergraduate studies, prior work place experience and relevant courses undertaken in MSW program. Because they are Masters’ students, they are required to demonstrate professional competencies above the baseline standards expected from undergraduate (BSW) students, while on their first placement. They are expected to do so because students who enter the MSW program will have significant work experience to draw on, in addition to having completed an undergraduate degree.

**At the conclusion of the course (placement) students will have demonstrated:**

Basic competency, appropriate to the placement setting, in all 7 areas of assessment outlined below. Students will together with their field educator develop a learning plan that identifies tasks and way to measure performance against each of the broad assessment areas.

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**Learning Area 1 - Values, ethics and professional practice:**

Awareness of contextually relevant ethics in accordance with the AASW Code of Ethics

1.1 – Demonstrates an awareness of the relevance of the AASW Code of Ethics within the placement setting (eg promotion of social justice and commitment to the dignity, value and uniqueness of individuals, social units, communities and cultures).

1.2 – Demonstrates an understanding of power relationships and structures that can give rise to and perpetuate relationships of inequality and social marginalisation for the target population, and demonstrates an ability to work constructively with issues of power and authority.

1.3 – Maintains an open and respectful perspective towards the values, views and opinions of others and is able to seek to incorporate notions of individual rights and needs, and collective responsibilities.

1.4 – Demonstrates an ability to recognise and understand one’s own assumptions and values and their ability to impact on practice (especially within situations of conflicts of values and interest).

1.5 – Demonstrates an understanding of social work as a profession and how it differs from other related professions.

1.6 – Demonstrates an understanding of issues such as privacy and confidentiality in relation to the ethical management of client records, including relevant legislation and agency policies.

**Learning Area 2 - Organisational context:**

An understanding of the organisational, legal and political contexts of human services processes.
2.1 – Demonstrates an understanding of the local and wider context in which the organisation operates (in particular the direct practice and social policy priorities of people living in the local region).
2.2 – Demonstrates an appreciation of the connection between individual problems, public issues and structural disadvantage.
2.3 – Demonstrates an ability to develop working relationships to deliver services to clients.
2.4 – Demonstrates an awareness of and adherence to, duty of care, risk management and organisational policies and procedures, including the legal rights of consumers.
2.5 – Demonstrates an understanding of current debates, social issues and/or politics which influence the field of practice.

**Learning Area 3 - Use of knowledge in practice:**

An understanding of theories and methodologies relevant to practice and ability to reflect critically upon their use and application.

3.1 – Demonstrate the ability to identify a range of social work theories relevant to the practice setting.
3.2 – Demonstrate the ability to clearly articulate a sound understanding of the relationship between theory and social work practice within the practice setting, and also at a macro level.
3.3 – Demonstrate an understanding and ability to use procedural knowledge in the completion of learning tasks

**Learning Area 4 - Processes, skills and relationships:**

An ability to form constructive relationships with individuals, groups and communities including user groups, colleagues, professionals and people in other significant roles / positions.

4.1.1 – Communication Skills:
4.1.2 – Demonstrates clear and effective interpersonal communication skills (both verbal and non-verbal) with individuals, groups and communities.
4.1.3 – Demonstrates purposeful and effective strategies to engage individuals, groups or communities.
4.1.4 – Demonstrates an ability to conduct single or joint interviews and demonstrates the ability to practice strategically (to engage, mobilise, challenge and encourage people in the change process).
4.1.5 – Demonstrates the capacity to deal with situations involving anger, conflict and challenging behaviour.
4.1.6 – Demonstrates an ability to write analytically and to distinguish between fact and opinion.
4.1.7 – Demonstrates an ability to incorporate formal knowledge and professional principles into documentation.
4.1.8 – Is able to prepare written assessment reports that demonstrate the ability to gather relevant information about and with the client/group/or community.
4.1.9 – Demonstrates an ability to use information technology for recording information, word-processing and data analysis.
4.1.10 – Adheres to documented policies within the agency: necessary recording processes – reports, assessment schedules, administrative documentation, statistical procedures, letters, etc.

4.2 - Assessment, Intervention, Referral and Evaluation:

4.2.1 – Demonstrates an ability to undertake an assessment of individuals and groups across a diverse range of life circumstances.

4.2.2 – Demonstrates an ability to use relevant organisational assessment and referral frameworks

4.2.3 – Demonstrates understanding of both formal and informal methods for evaluating Social Work interventions and ability to articulate these to both service user and supervisor.

4.2.4 – Demonstrates an ability to implement the intervention plan, engaging in activities such as: facilitation, mediation, negotiation and advocacy on behalf of service users; counselling, education and skills transference; coordination and liaison with other service providers (in collaboration with the client/service user); crisis intervention; working with an interpreters.

4.2.5 – Demonstrates and ability to implement strategies to support and assist clients to find new ways of coping

4.3 - Group & Team-work Skills:

4.3.1 – Demonstrates an understanding of group processes within organisational groups and committees.

4.3.2 – Demonstrates competence in participation in group discussions.

4.3.3 – Demonstrates an ability to initiate group approaches to problem-solving.

4.3.4 – Demonstrates an ability to work effectively in teams and networks by establishing relationships with colleagues and/or team members, consumers, consumer groups and authority figures.

4.3.5 – Demonstrates an ability to participate in the management of meetings through assuming formal roles, e.g. secretary/scribe, note-taker, chairperson.

4.3.6 – Is able to reflect on, critique and maintain productive and purposeful working relationships with colleagues and other key stakeholders of the placement agency.

4.3.7 – Demonstrates ability to co-ordinate and liaise when necessary with other service providers, in collaboration with the client/service user.

Learning Area 5 - Self learning and professional development:

The ability to take responsibility for one’s own learning and development, and to perform at a level of competence appropriate to a beginning social work practitioner, including the skills to manage one’s future career and the transition from university to professional practice.

5.1 – Demonstrate the ability to participate proactively in negotiating and developing the supervisory relationship.

5.2 – Demonstrate an ability to formulate and articulate one’s own learning needs and objectives.

5.3 – Demonstrate a willingness to take risks and expose own practice for scrutiny from supervisor.

5.4 – Demonstrate an awareness of personal feelings and experience and how these affect practice.
5.5 – Demonstrate understanding of the theory of critical reflection & an ability to use this approach to critically examine own practice.
5.6 – Demonstrate the capacity to work with increasing autonomy and professional responsibility.
5.7 – Demonstrate an ability to function effectively in complex practice situations.
5.8 – Identify areas for future learning & development & recognise the importance of future professional development as a social worker.
5.9 – Manage workload efficiently and effectively.
5.10 – Ability to demonstrate appropriate responsibility, accountability, reliability and initiative within the work setting.

**Learning Area 6 - Research:**
Recognition of research as an integral part of social work practice; demonstrating knowledge and understanding of all types and stages of social research.
6.1 – Demonstrates the ability to effectively engage stakeholders in the research and/or evaluation process.
6.2 – Demonstrates the ability to undertake, critically assess and draw upon relevant literature searches to plan and conduct research.
6.3 – Demonstrates the ability to conduct research and program evaluation with groups and communities using sound methodological approaches.
6.4 – Demonstrates the ability to analyse and communicate results of research through preparation of clear, concise, organised and well argued research reporting.
6.5 – Demonstrates an understanding of how research knowledge informs practice.
6.6 – Demonstrates an understanding of how research and evaluation techniques/frameworks can assist with broader knowledge development within practice (e.g. consulting published literature, question formation and data gathering techniques etc).

**Learning Area 7 - Social policy:**
An understanding of the legislative and social policies which influence the different fields of practice including knowledge of relevant legislative and policy frameworks.
7.1 – Demonstrates an ability to identify relevant legislation, policies and regulations, and to interpret and analyse the impacts of these on practice.
7.2 – Demonstrates an ability to understand policy development, community and political processes involved in linking direct practice experience with broader social change objectives.

**Overview of Learning Activities**
In accordance with the requirements of the professionally accrediting body for fieldwork (AASW), the learning activities will be provided through a placement structure that consists of 70 days (or equivalent) supervised practice in a relevant organization.

Overview of Learning Activities:
A) Field Briefings and other preparatory work;
B) 70-Day Field Placement
C) Integration seminars
D) Learning/Educational Plan
E) Mid and End of Placement Reviews
F) Critical Analysis - 3,000 words

**Details of Learning Activities**

BSW Field Education 1 is directed towards preparation for effective beginning professional practice in social work with individuals, families and small groups. Although the focus in placement is on direct service, students are also expected to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the service users, the programs, policies, organisation, administration and community context of the agency, as well as the broader structural factors affecting the distribution of power and resources in society.

In accordance with the requirements of the professionally accrediting body for social work education (Australian Association of Social Workers - AASW) the principal learning activities for Field Education 1 will be provided through a placement structure that consists of 70 days (or equivalent, of the total 140 days stipulated for the MSW), in supervised practice in a relevant organisation. Field Educators who meet the accreditation requirements of the AASW will provide supervision.

Through this course students will have the opportunity to strengthen and develop their professional skills, knowledge and values within a workplace-learning environment. Students will be required to demonstrate an understanding of organisational and community contexts of practice, as well as effectively dealing with the ethical dilemmas that are likely to be encountered. Placements may focus on community organisation, program development, policy development and/or research and may include a component of direct practice work. Students will be expected to analyse the practice setting by drawing on a range of theoretical perspectives, in particular those concerning power and exclusion, and to develop appropriate responses.

This course requires students to actively draw from previous knowledge and experience when determining their specific learning goals while they are on placement. This includes integrating previously studies material, especially in social work theory and practice and in field education as well as prior workplace learning.

The Critical Analysis is a major requirement of third year and a pass in this assessment component is necessary to pass Field Education 1. The Critical Analysis focuses on a student’s work with an individual, a family or a group. It should be a detailed report describing the individual/family/group and their contexts, together with the student’s thinking and action. It will also be a tool to assist students in the process of reflecting on and assessing their own practice. Refer Section 12.9 MSW Field Education Manual 2011.
Teaching Schedule

- Field Education Briefing Workshops in first semester
- Placement planning and preparation in consultation with the 3rd year field education coordinator and other relevant staff
- 70 days field placement
- Learning plan / midway review / final report
- Integrative seminars
- Case study

Preliminary consultation leading to placement allocation and referral.

For students undertaking placements in Victoria a series of three integrative seminars will be held monthly, dates to be advised. Students are expected to attend seminars held whilst on placement.

Student is assigned a liaison person responsible for: educational consultation, monitoring, evaluation of learning opportunities and performance, mediation and problem solving.

Overview of Learning Resources

MSW Field Education 1 (advanced) Course Guide
MSW Field Education Manual
Student directed reading (see list of references below as a starting point.)

Other Resources

Other Resources: RMIT University MSW Field Education Manual 2011.

Overview of Assessment

- Active participation at placement orientation session/s
- Active participation at integration seminars
- Satisfactory completion of the 70 Day Field Placement, or equivalent. This includes the satisfactory completion of the Learning/Educational Plan and Mid and End of Placement Reviews. (The Placement Report is central to this requirement)
- Satisfactory completion of an evaluation report on placement performance (Placement Report)
- Satisfactory completion of a Critical Analysis (Practice) -3000 words. Submitted within two weeks of the end of the placement.