

Staffordshire University

Faculty of Health

**Programme Area of Social Work and Advice
Studies**

BA (Hons) Social Work

PRACTICE LEARNING HANDBOOK

For Students and Practice Educators

**Honours Level
Full Time Route**

Module Handbook

2011-2012

Module Code: HEW73303-6

1. Introduction

This handbook deals with many of the issues that you will face, both in preparing for and undertaking this important aspect of the award. Although some information is geared more towards students or practice educators, we recommend that everyone reads all the sections.

Students have already completed their assessed practice at Intermediate Level Five so much of what is contained in this handbook will be familiar. The final placement of 110 days will provide an opportunity to demonstrate the full range of knowledge, skills and competence, assessed against the 6 key roles.

What Students are entitled to expect

- a. You will be working in an agency which will offer opportunities to gain experience as a trainee social worker and to achieve the required level of competence by the end of the 110 days.
- b. You will be expected to work on the basis of a 'normal' 9am - 5pm, 7 hour working day (excluding lunch breaks). We recognise that some students may negotiate flexible working arrangements and may need to accommodate child care responsibilities. It is imperative that at the learning agreement stage, everyone is clear about the working arrangements and the agency expectations, especially with regard to start times each day. Students should neither fall short of, nor exceed, the required 110 days. A careful record should be kept throughout.
- c. You will have regular supervision, properly planned and recorded, throughout your 110 days of at least 1.5 hours per week or 3 hours per fortnight.
- d. You will have access to a personal tutor throughout your 110 days by appointment and / or in the context of your 4 Learning Consolidation Days (LCDs) held at the University. These LCDs are compulsory and contribute to the 110 days.
- e. You will be given clear feedback throughout, especially in matters to do with achieving competence. Students are expected to demonstrate the necessary level of competence during the 110 days of placement. In the event of being deemed to be 'marginal' or 'failing', we will put in place appropriate measures to enable you to meet the required level of competence. Should you fail the placement, however, it would only be in exceptional circumstances that you would be allowed another opportunity. The Placement is NOT the same as an academic module assignment where students who have submitted a first attempt on time are given an automatic second opportunity to succeed.

Details of the second opinion process are included on the portal.

N.B. Under no circumstances should a student make an individual decision to withdraw from a placement as this will be deemed to be a fail.

What Practice Educators are entitled to expect

- a. Students will have passed all Certificate level modules and the following Intermediate level modules:
 - Every Child Matters
 - Community Care with Adults
 - Life Span Development
 - Placement
- b. Students will also have begun to work on Honours Level modules before the final placement begins. These are:
 - i. Research-Mindedness
 - ii. Understanding Organisations and Inter-professional Practice
 - iii. Current Themes and Issues: An Appraisal of Practice

Because modules are intended to help students apply knowledge to their direct practice, there will be a requirement for them to draw on agency and practice experience before completing their assessments.

iv. Practice Learning module - Further details regarding the Critical Incident Analysis are provided within this handbook.

2. Criminal record, good character and good health

On joining the BA (Hons) Social Work award in Certificate Level 4, students must obtain an enhanced level CRB disclosure. Students are asked to produce this document by the designated officer prior to, or at the commencement of, any future placement. In Levels 5 and 6, the University arranges for enrolled students to complete and sign a self declaration form regarding criminal record, good character and good health. Students are required to inform the University immediately if, at any stage, change in their circumstances or events affects their suitability for the programme. The Programme Area Manager investigates any convictions / cautions or self declared changes of circumstance and advises the student about action to be taken regarding placement.

3. Insurance issues

The Programme Handbook gives full details of insurance arrangements for students working in agencies. The signing of the learning agreement signifies that all parties have noted and discussed these

arrangements and specifically that students must on no account commit the agency to the expenditure of resources without the express written permission of the appropriate manager who is accountable for the student's work.

Students must at all times make clear to service users and other professionals that her / his status is that of a student or trainee social worker. This should be done verbally and on all appropriate documentation. It is an important safeguard for the student, the agency and service users.

Students using cars whilst working for the agency must show a valid driving licence and business use certificate of insurance to the practice educator and / or appropriate manager.

4. Leave entitlement

Students are entitled to take leave (as outlined in the Honours Level 6 Award Handbook) at Christmas and Easter but they must ensure that their work-based supervisor and practice educator are aware of their intention to do so. Leave should be discussed at the pre-practice placement meeting.

Many students, however, prefer to negotiate different leave dates, with the approval of the agency and practice educator. They must ensure that it will be possible to complete 110 practice learning days (including the 4 learning consolidation days and study time as outlined below) between 14 November 2011 and 15 May 2012.

5. Study time

Full time students are entitled to 11 days of study time. The time must be spent on work directly relevant to the student's practice learning and will contribute to the total of 110 practice learning days.

6. Sickness absence

Students who are absent from placement due to illness must comply with any agency arrangements discussed at the pre-placement meeting. They should also notify the University on telephone number 01782 294646 and the practice educator on the first day of absence. Medical certificates will be required by the University in accordance with normal University requirements. Sickness days cannot be counted towards the 110 days and the time must be made up.

7. Submission of Learning Agreement

The completed Learning Agreement (including the health and safety checklist) must be signed, circulated and sent to the tutor within 3 working weeks of the commencement of the placement.

8. **Confidentiality and anonymity**

Adherence to confidentiality policies must be carefully observed at all times. Students will gather potentially sensitive information during practice and it is essential that all identifying features of service users are anonymised in any work submitted.

9. **E-mail and MyPortal**

Students on placement are expected to check their e-mail at least once per week to ensure that they do not miss any important messages. University e-mail can be accessed while off-campus via MyPortal which also contains other important information for students.

10. **Evaluations of placement**

The GSCC requires that evaluations of placement are completed by all students, practice educators, tutors and work-based supervisors (where applicable). These will be used by the University to monitor the quality of the student experience and to make decisions for future practice learning. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all parties to the placement complete the evaluations which will be placed on the portal. **The student's portfolio will only be presented for consideration by the Practice Assessment Panel if the evaluations of placement forms have been completed and submitted.**

11. **Professional behaviour**

The General Social Care Council insists that all students are assessed as being safe and ready to practise before undertaking assessed social work tasks in an agency. Students were assessed as being 'safe and ready' during their Certificate level studies and this commitment to best practice must be maintained. They have successfully completed the Intermediate Level placement. Students should also take care to comply with the Staffordshire University Contract of Professional Behaviour.

NB. Practice educators will need to ensure that each student is given every opportunity to gain confidence at an appropriate pace, especially in the first few weeks, and that more experienced students who have had previous experience of work in a statutory agency are not treated as *an extra pair of hands*. Every student must have a range of relevant work to undertake as a student to demonstrate competence and to expand and enrich their experience.

KEY DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Pre-placement meeting: To be agreed between student, practice educator, work-based supervisor (where applicable) and tutor.

Start date: 14 November, 2011.

Deadline for submission of Learning Agreement to Tutor: Three weeks after commencement of placement.

Learning consolidation days (compulsory):

1 Friday, 16 December, 2011

a.m. Guidance on how to approach the assessment for the Critical Incident Appraisal of Practice - Room GO28 (Cadman Building).

This is a joint session with practice educators.

N.B. Practice educators are urged to attend this morning session so that they are fully aware of the instructions and guidance given to students. The student should ensure that their practice educator is given plenty of notice about this session.

p.m. Student to arrange personal tutorials with tutor.

2 Friday, 13 January, 2012

a.m. Anti - Discriminatory Practice - Room B100 (Brindley Building).

p.m. Social Work Theory - Room BG36 (Brindley Building).

3 Friday, 24 February, 2012

a.m. Talk by ASIST - Room BG61 (Brindley Building).

N.B. Any Practice educators wishing to attend this morning session will be very welcome.

p.m. Applying for jobs and interviews. Room BG61.

4 To be confirmed

The room and further details will be provided nearer the time.

Mid point review meeting: To be negotiated between student, practice educator, work-based supervisor (where applicable) and tutor.

Final meeting: To be negotiated between student, practice educator and work-based supervisor (where applicable).

End of placement date: 15 May, 2012.

Hand in dates for student work

Research Mindedness: 9 December, 2011.

Understanding Organisations: 25 November, 2011.

Current Themes Assignment: 2 March, 2012.

Critical Incident Presentation and Commentary: 3 or 4 May, 2012 to be confirmed

Portfolio: 15 May, 2012.

Other key dates

Practice Assessment Panel: 30 May, 2012 (to be confirmed).

NB. All Practice Educators are strongly encouraged to attend at least half a day to help with this final assessment.

Practice Educator Support Groups: A number of these will be held at the University. Please see learning Consolidation Days for students (above). Invitations to any additional sessions will be e-mailed to practice educators.

Your attention is particularly drawn to the session on the assessment for the Critical Incident Analysis on 16 December which will be held jointly with students.

CORE DOCUMENTATION

The core documentation that you will need for your practice learning is included on the portal and can be accessed via:

www.staffs.ac.uk/courses/gateway/social_work

↓
BA (Hons) Social Work

↓
Study Area

↓
Documents and Guides

↓
Placement Documentation (Full Time)

Documents you need are:

- Learning agreement
- Competence record and final report
- Direct observation of practice form
- Mid point report form
- Agenda for mid point meeting between student, practice educator, work-based supervisor (where applicable) and tutor
- Agenda for final placement meeting
- Portfolio checklist with guidance for completion of portfolio contents
- Evaluation of Placement by Student
- Evaluation of Placement by Practice Educator
- Evaluation of Placement by Work-Based Supervisor (where applicable)
- Second opinion process where there are placement concerns
- Information about the Critical Incident Analysis and assessment criteria

NB.

- Students are also required to complete their Professional Development Portfolio documentation to submit with their practice portfolio.
- Students are required to provide their practice educator with a copy of their Intermediate Level Practice Educator report at the pre-placement meeting.

Practice Learning Critical Incident Analysis

1. What is a critical incident?

A critical incident is an event which causes you to stop and think about yourself or others, about processes or policies. It might be a particular home visit, or an incident which occurs during a group work session or inter-professional meeting. If the incident is too lengthy, it will be difficult to write up and analyse. We are not looking for a full-scale case study. Try to focus on the part that made you stop and think.

An incident could be regarded as 'critical' if:

- An encounter went a lot better or worse than you expected
- You now feel you made a mistake or an unwise decision
- You felt pressurised
- You faced a difficult ethical dilemma which you had to resolve
- An approach or method that you have found useful up till now was not effective
- You found it difficult to value a service user and their views
- You realised that you lacked certain skills
- Or you did particularly well.

This list is not exhaustive – any incident which brings about reflection and learning could be regarded as critical. You can find out more about critical incidents and how to analyse them on the web site of the Scottish Social Services Council at <http://cactusid.heehawdevelopment.com/LO2-HowToDolt-Frameworks-CriticalIncidentAnalysis.html>

2. Choosing a topic

The topic or theme for your presentation should emerge naturally from your supervision sessions with your practice educator. You need to choose **one critical incident** from the work you have done with a service user (scrupulously anonymised). It does not need to be hugely complex, but you do need to ensure that the incident is suitable for you to be able to cover the following elements in your assessed work:

- Sufficient contextual information to enable your audience to understand the critical incident. This should include the social context in which the incident occurred
- Your social work professional and personal values
- How ethical issues and dilemmas have been tackled
- How theoretical perspectives and / or social work theory has informed your practice
- Outcomes of the incident, what you have learned from it, and future learning needs.

3. **How you will be assessed**

This assessment is designed to help you present a set of issues clearly using your verbal, IT and written skills. These are important in all social work, and will be especially useful when you come to undertake presentations for job interviews. You will also be expected to demonstrate your ability to critically analyse practice and integrate theory.

40% of the marks for the module are linked to a Powerpoint presentation which will take place on **3 or 4 May 2012**. This will be marked by a panel including a tutor, a practice educator and a service user or carer.

60% of the marks for the module are linked to a written commentary. This will be marked by your own practice educator and by a tutor. **The hand-in date will be 3 or 4 May 2012.**

4. **Powerpoint presentation**

It is entirely up to you how you present your material but remember that you only have 15 minutes to present the material. There will be 5 minutes for questions. You need to ensure that you give a brief introduction to the incident so that your audience understands the scenario. It is helpful then to outline what are the practice issues you are going to discuss, and what ethical challenges and practice dilemmas you have faced when working with this service user. It is then up to you to work through the following issues:

- Description of the critical incident
- The social context in which the incident occurred
- Your social work professional and personal values
- How ethical issues and dilemmas have been tackled
- How social work theory and / or theoretical perspectives have informed your practice

You will not necessarily gain more marks by including a greater number of theories. You need to focus on the theoretical perspectives or approaches that have most informed your practice. You need to include a reflection on the key values and any clash of values (personal and professional) involved. The presentation should end with what you decided to do and why.

REMEMBER: keep a clear focus on the main issue: we do not need you to tell us everything you know about the service user. We are much more interested in how you grappled with challenges and dilemmas and how you resolved them.

5. **Critical Commentary (2,500 words)**

This is, in effect, a slightly expanded version of the talk you give when speaking to your Powerpoint slides. So it needs to have the same structure and to be in the same sequence as the Powerpoint slide presentation.

However, the critical commentary also requires you to identify outcomes, your learning from the critical incident and your future learning needs. It gives you the opportunity to include relevant references and to expand on some issues that you would not have had time to cover in your verbal presentation. But the secret is to regard it as an expanded commentary, and not a totally separate piece of work.

The critical commentary should include:

- The context of the critical incident - include a **brief** description of the people involved, their circumstances, the social context, and the involvement to date of yourself and your agency. (*This section should not be over-long – make sure you have left yourself sufficient space to do justice to the other requirements.)
- Description and analysis of the critical incident
- Professional and personal values in relation to the incident
- Analysis of ethical dilemmas and how these were resolved
- Theoretical perspectives / social work theory that informed your approach to the incident
- Outcomes of the incident (What happened? What did you decide to do?)
- Your own learning arising from the incident (for example, what have you learned about yourself and your own responses) and future learning needs that you have identified
- * **Note:** Please bear in mind how many marks are allowed for each of these issues when you decide how much of your word allocation to use for each.

6. Handy Hints

- Decide on your theme and the key points
- Prepare draft Powerpoint slides
- What comes next? There are two approaches you could take to this.
 - You could write your critical commentary, and then produce your notes for the verbal presentation.
 - OR you could prepare your verbal presentation, and then expand it into the critical commentary. The choice is yours!
- Practise delivering your talk and time it carefully. Please, please, please do NOT read off your notes – look at your audience and talk to us as you would if at interview – that is so much more effective, especially if you smile!
- Read Moss B (2008) *Communication Skills for Health and Social Care*, London, Sage. Pages 182 – 192 for handy hints on giving talks and presentations.
- Try to enjoy it!

CRITICAL INCIDENT PRESENTATION – MARKING SCHEDULE

Learning outcome 3: *Communicate effectively the application of values, ethics and theoretical perspectives to a key area of the student’s own social work practice.*

Student’s name:

	Comments	Mark awarded
Clarity and relevance of the critical incident chosen, and the social context in which it occurred. <i>Maximum mark = 15</i>		
Quality of Powerpoint slides <i>Maximum mark = 15</i>		
Clarity with which key themes are introduced and discussed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional and personal values • How ethical issues and dilemmas have been tackled • How social work theory / theoretical perspectives have informed practice <i>Maximum mark = 45</i>		
Ability to answer questions arising from the presentation <i>Maximum mark = 25</i>		
TOTAL MARK <i>maximum 100</i>		

Name of panel leader:

Signature:

CRITICAL COMMENTARY – MARKING SCHEDULE

Word length: 2,500

Name of student:

	Mark
Context of the incident – people, circumstances and social context, professional involvement to date <i>Maximum mark = 10</i>	
Description and analysis of the critical incident <i>Maximum mark = 10</i>	
Discussion of professional and personal values in relation to the incident and its context <i>Maximum mark = 15</i>	
Analysis of ethical dilemmas and how these were resolved <i>Maximum mark =15</i>	
Identification of the theoretical perspectives / SW theory that informed practice <i>Maximum mark = 15</i>	
Outcomes and learning arising from the incident <i>Maximum mark =15</i>	
Capacity for critical analysis <i>Maximum mark = 10</i>	
Use of relevant literature <i>Maximum mark =10</i>	
Academic skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure, clarity, spelling and grammar • Harvard referencing within the text and in the reference list <i>Maximum mark = 10</i>	
TOTAL <i>Maximum mark = 100</i>	

Name of marker:

Comments may be attached on a separate sheet.

Information for markers: Marks are equivalent to the following classes of degree. You may also find it useful to consider the equivalence of marks for individual aspects or sections of the assignment.

First class – 70% + (7+ out of 10 / 10.5+ out of 15 for an individual section or aspect of the assignment)

Upper second 2(i) - 60 to 69% (6 out of 10 / 9+ out of 15 for an individual section or aspect of the assignment)

Lower second 2(ii) - 50 to 59% (5 out of 10 / 7.5+ out of 15 for an individual section or aspect of the assignment)

Third class - 40 to 49% (4 out of 10 / 6+ out of 15 for an individual section or aspect of the assignment)

Fail – 39% or below (less than 4 out of 10 / less than 6 out of 15 for an individual section or aspect of the assignment)