

# Procedure for assessing recognition of prior learning (RPL) for first social work placement

## Background

The School of Nursing, Midwifery & Social Work recognises that some qualifying social work students bring with them substantial experience in the human services sector. The process outlined in this document details the way in which this prior experience may be credited towards the first social work placement in the qualifying social work programs.

Both the AASW and UQ allow for recognition of prior work experience as credit towards specified courses. According to the AASW (Section 4.3.5, AASW Accreditation Document 2008) assessment of credit for prior learning involves consideration of:

- Credit for the first placement may be possible on the basis of recognition of prior work experience, or the successful completion of social work placements, completed prior to entry into the social work program.
- Performance outcomes for first placement based on the AASW Practice Standards and Code of Ethics must be used to assess students for RPL.
- In accordance with the policies in this document credit for the first social work placement, will take account of:
  - The currency of the work experience (minimum 5FTE in last 10 years)
  - With a minimum of 3 years practice in a relevant context
  - Use of social work practice skills such as assessment and counselling
  - Familiarity and use of a range of methods such as case work and community work
  - Verification of student's claims by a qualified social worker who can attest to its accuracy
- Recognition of Prior learning for social work must be thoroughly assessed.
- In order to be granted RPL for first social work placement, the student must provide evidence that they have met the standards and performance outcomes for the first placement. This should include for example, job descriptions accompanied by referee reports; skills assessment and critical reflection on placement or work experience.

UQ also allows recognition of prior (informal) learning to be used as credit transferred in lieu of a course. Principles for RPL at UQ are detailed in the 'Recognition of Prior Learning' procedure in Section [3.50.03](#) of the UQ Policy and Procedures Library.

## Courses

This policy relates to SWSP3155 Field Placement 1 (#6) in the Bachelor of Social Work program and SWSP7155 Field Placement 1 (#6) in the Master of Social Work Studies program.

## Amount of placement that can be credited

Depending on the level of competence demonstrated in prior work experience, the school may credit all, or part, of the first placement.

- If part of a placement is credited in line with AASW policy, the minimum number of hours that must be completed is 280.
- If partial credit is granted, students will be required to complete 280 hours over a ten week period (4 days per week) or a variation on this providing that placement is no less than 3 days per week.

## Criteria for RPL

In order to meet university and professional obligations, a number of criteria have been set in assessing a student's RPL application. The minimum criteria are:

- 5 years full time (equivalent) general work experience over the past 10 years; INCLUDING
- 3 years full time (equivalent) practice experience in a field directly relevant to social work, using social work practice skills; PLUS
- A current curriculum vitae which details the student's past work experience in relation to the points above; PLUS
- An RPL portfolio which demonstrates achievement of the first social work placement learning objectives; PLUS
- Completion of an Assessment of Competencies for RPL form by a person who has acted as a work supervisor in relation to the relevant social work practice experience; PLUS
- Completion of the 'Application for Recognition of Prior Learning for First Social Work Placement' form, demonstrating the above.

An application for RPL of first social work placement must be submitted to the Practice Education Manager a minimum of **3 months** prior to placement starting, and must be noted on the student's pre-placement information form. This is to assist in the School's placement planning process.

A student's application for RPL is assessed jointly by the Program Director of the relevant program and the Practice Education Manager. In cases where information is not clear, or further information is required, the student may be required to attend an interview with the Program Director and the Practice Education Manager.

In order to be eligible for full credit for first placement, the Assessment of Competencies for RPL (see 5 above) must evidence satisfactory progress in no less **than five out of the six listed competencies** and associated criteria.

In order to be eligible for partial credit for first placement, the 'Assessment of Competencies for RPL' must evidence satisfactory progress in no less than three out of the six listed competencies and associated criteria.

A recommendation is then made to the Executive Dean at the UQ Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences (HaBS) for a decision. Students will be notified of the outcome of the decision within 28 days of receipt of the application via the student's university e-mail account.

### Format for the RPL Portfolio

The RPL Portfolio should contain:

Six statements (300-400 words each) evidencing achievement of the following first placement learning objectives:

1. Understanding of the purpose and role of social work in society.
2. Understanding of and competence in the organisational aspects of social work practice.
3. Capacity to form and maintain purposeful and ethical professional relationships.
4. Competence in assessment and planning, drawing on professional knowledge.
5. Skills in planned intervention with individuals, groups or communities.
6. Commitment to ongoing professional learning and capacity to adjust practice in response to feedback.

Each statement should include:

1. Examples from the student's practice experience which evidence the level of competence; PLUS
2. A critical reflection on the practice experience with links made to the AASW Social Work Practice Standards and Code of Ethics; PLUS
3. Priorities for future learning.



## Application for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for first social work placement

Name: .....

Student Number: .....

Program: .....

Please indicate your agreement with the statements below by ticking the box.

I have ...

A minimum of 5 years full time (equivalent) general work experience over the past 10 years;  
INCLUDING

A minimum of 3 years full time (equivalent) practice experience in a field directly relevant to  
social work, using equivalent social work practice skills; PLUS

Attached a current curriculum vitae which details my past work experience and explains the  
equivalent social work skills and methods used; PLUS

Attached an RPL portfolio which demonstrates achievement of social work competencies  
equivalent to those expected at the completion of the first placement; PLUS

Attached an Assessment of Competencies for RPL form completed and signed by a person who  
has been in a work supervision capacity with me.

Signature: .....

Name: .....

Date: .....

This application must be submitted to the Practice Education Manager  
via [fielded@uq.edu.au](mailto:fielded@uq.edu.au)  
no later than 3 months prior to the start of first placement