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## Practicum, Field and Clinical Placements

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### 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 enrolments
- 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

- [Health Practitioner Regulation National Law \(Schedule\)](#)
- [Occupational Therapy Practice Act 2005](#)
- [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

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- 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
  - d. comply with the rules and regulations of the organisation in which they are placed.
- 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 Where students are required to source their own placements, they are to provide the Course Coordinator with information about that placement, as specified in the course information booklet (see [clause 2.1.4](#))
- 4.1.9 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 legislation**

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- 4.2.1 Legislative reporting obligations arising under the [Health Practitioner Regulation National Law](#) and the [Occupational Therapy Practice Act 2005](#) apply to concerns about the medical fitness of students on placement in the following academic disciplines:
- a. Midwifery
  - b. Nursing
  - c. Occupational Therapy
  - d. Pharmacy
  - e. Physiotherapy
  - f. Podiatry
  - g. Psychology.

- 4.2.2 Any University staff member who is also a health professional, and who is involved in the teaching and /or supervision of students on placement, is subject to reporting obligations under the legislation.
- 4.2.3 Concerns about medical fitness may arise in relation to:
- a. a physical or mental impairment, disability, condition or disorder (including substance abuse or dependence)
  - 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 Legislation requires 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 as defined under the legislation 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. legislation provides for appeal against the decision of the registration board
  - d. continuing enrolment in the program may be contingent upon the student's acceptance of conditions imposed by the relevant board after any appeal has been heard
  - e. continuing enrolment in the program is contingent on student registration with the registration board.
- 4.2.7 A copy of all reports of concerns about medical fitness must be confidentially forwarded to Campus Central or UniSA transnational administration office, as applicable, 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**

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- 4.3.1 In addition to the legislative reporting obligations described above, any concern about the suitability of a student for a placement in any academic discipline, (including concerns about medical fitness) 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 documentary evidence of suitability for placement including, where appropriate, evidence of medical fitness for placement, 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 A copy of all reports of concerns about suitability for placement must be confidentially forwarded to Campus Central or UniSA transnational administration office, as applicable, 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**

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- 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 (e.g. 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. A complete copy of the papers is to be retained on the student's file. All remaining copies are to be destroyed using a confidential method.
- 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 or UniSA transnational administration office, as applicable, 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 or UniSA transnational administration office, as applicable, to be retained on the student's file.

#### **4.5 Unsatisfactory performance on a placement**

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- 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 (e.g. 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**

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- 4.6.1 Where a Course Coordinator, placement supervisor or placement provider identifies a student whose:
- 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
  - behaviour may constitute misconduct under [Statute 7](#) of the University of South Australia Statutes, or
  - actions may involve academic misconduct as described in [Section 9](#) of this Manual
- the student will be required to 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 with the Course Coordinator or Academic Integrity Officer by:
- a representative of UniLife, or in the case of transnational students, a representative of the UniSA partner institution
  - 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:
- allow the student to continue the placement, or
  - arrange for the student to complete an alternative placement, or
  - 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 or UniSA transnational administration office, as applicable, 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 following:
- for risk as defined in clause 4.6.1 a., refer to the procedures set out in clause 4.2 or 4.3 of this Manual, as appropriate
  - for general misconduct as defined in University of South Australia [Statute 7](#), refer to the procedures set out in [Statute 7](#)
  - for academic misconduct as defined in clause 9.2, refer to the procedures set out in clauses [9.6.5 – 9.6.15](#) of this Manual.

#### **4.7 Unprofessional conduct on a placement**

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- 4.7.1 This section applies only to Occupational Therapy where state legislation requires reporting of unprofessional conduct by students on placement. All other disciplines should refer to clause 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 legislation, the University is required to make a report to the 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 Head of School and the Program Director will discuss the matter with the student. 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 legislation provides 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 Unprofessional conduct generally**

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- 4.8.1 This section applies only to programs covered by the [Health Practitioner Regulation National Law](#) in the academic disciplines listed in clause 4.2.1.
- 4.8.2 Students must make a written report to the relevant registration board, with whom they are registered, of any of the events listed below, within seven days after becoming aware of the event occurring:
- a. the student is charged with an offence punishable by 12 months imprisonment or more
  - b. the student is convicted of or the subject of a finding of guilt for an offence punishable by imprisonment, or
  - c. the student's registration under the law of another country that provides for the registration of students has been suspended or cancelled.

#### **4.9 Loss of student registration**

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- 4.9.1 This clause applies only to programs in the academic disciplines listed in clause 4.2.1.
- 4.9.2 A student must immediately notify the University where they have received notification from a registration board of suspension or imposition of a condition on their registration.
- 4.9.3 Where a registration board suspends a student's registration, refuses initial registration, or for any other reason the student does not hold student registration with a board, the University will cancel that student's enrolment in the program. In such cases, there is an appeal mechanism against the removal of student registration under the relevant legislation. Re-enrolment or reinstatement in the program will be contingent on student registration being achieved.
- 4.9.4 Where student registration is lost, the University may 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.