EDST5118

Special Education Advanced Professional Practice

Placement Handbook

Updated November 2025

This handbook includes information relevant to the EDST5118 Special Education Advanced Professional Practice Placement. For further details on course-related matters, including assessment requirements, please refer to the EDST5118 course outline.

CRICOS Provider Code 00098G

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Welcome

Welcome to our Professional Experience courses. Our Teacher Education degree programs could not exist without your support as partners in the conduct of our professional experience curriculum.

The professional experience curriculum in our degree programs is highly valued by our students. In turn, all academic staff members in our school recognise the importance of professional experience by acting as liaisons between our school and yours. Through these liaison visits, our staff make connections for our students between what is taught on campus and what they learn in your school.

Our professional experience curriculum is supported by a skilled, diligent and responsive Professional Experience Team. We hope the information provided here is informative and clear, but please don't hesitate to contact our team if you need clarification.

Yours in partnership in professional experience,

Tony

Associate Professor Tony Loughland
Head of School
School of Education
UNSW Australia

Contacts

UNSW SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

COURSE CONVENOR
Joanne Danker
E: j.danker@unsw.edu.au
For inquiries related to coursework, assessments and placement visits, please contact the Course Convenor.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE/ WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING TEAM
Phone: 02 9385 9388
Email: professionalexperience@unsw.edu.au
For inquiries related to the placement and placement documentation, please contact the WIL team.

GENERAL EDUCATION ENQUIRIES
School Enquiries
Email: education@unsw.edu.au
For general inquiries related to your program, please contact the School of Education.

STUDENT NUCLEUS
Phone: 02 9385 8500
Ask a question: https://portal.insight.unsw.edu.au/web-forms/
For inquiries related to enrolment consent, pre-requisites, program progression and eligibility, please contact the Student Nucleus.

Master of Education (Special Education) Program Overview

Learn to support students in all environments.

Our postgraduate programs in Special Education are designed for teachers who wish to better facilitate inclusion of students with disabilities, as well as for those who want to work as special educators in specialised settings.

The program aims to meet the diverse needs of educators, with a strong focus on developing teacher skills to support students in all environments. Our postgraduate Special Education courses can also assist educational leaders by exploring the underlying theories of special needs education and identifying ways in which these theories can be integrated within the context of Australian schools.

Why study Special Education?

All schools are required to provide equitable education provisions for students with disabilities under the 2005 Disability Standards for Education Act. Special Education has also been identified as a target area for Australian Department of Education retraining programs.

This initiative responds to the increasing demands for knowledge and skills in teaching children and adults with special needs.

Working as a Special Education teacher

A Master of Education (Special Education) is a formal Special Education teacher qualification recognised by the NSW Education Standards Authority, and a teaching practicum is an essential component of the master's program.

Please note, NESA accreditation applies to teaching in NSW only; teachers who wish to work in other Australian states or territories must apply for registration with the relevant authority.

Placement Overview

Description	This course comprises 25 days of advanced professional practice, including high-level teaching, observation, and critical reflection in special education, together with peer observations and school-based fieldwork. It is a core requirement for accredited *Australian primary and secondary school teachers seeking a formal qualification in Special Education and provides practising teachers with additional classroom experience in this specialist field. *Teachers who are not accredited to teach in New South Wales but wish to qualify as specialist teachers in Special Education should contact NESA to confirm their eligibility for NSW teacher accreditation before pursuing this specialisation. Note that NESA accreditation applies to teaching in NSW only; teachers who wish to work in other Australian states or territories must apply for registration with the relevant authority.
Term Offering	Term 1 and Term 3
Enrolment Conditions	Students must have completed the required pre-requisites and conditions for enrolment. Please refer to the UNSW Handbook for further details
Number of Days	25 days: The equivalent 25 days of teaching practice is a mandated component of any specialist teaching method for schools and adult educational institutions nationally. The Special Education Student must attend for a total of 25 days, which can be completed consecutively or part-time (e.g. 3 days a week), provided the placement is completed within the allocated timeframe.
Placement Duties and Requirements	This placement requires: 1/3 of direct teaching (this can be in a support unit, SSP or in a class with a range of needs) 1/3 of structured observations, where the Special Education Student can observe a range of experienced teachers in the field 1/3 participation in other program activities, including meetings, assemblies, and other duties specified by the school

Placement Allocation

The Work Integrated Office is responsible for organising and confirming all placements. The Office communicates with a wide range of DoE, Independent and Catholic schools to seek placements. As part of the enrolment process in this course, Special Education students are required to fill-in a profile through the InPlace system and provide information such as prior experience, teaching qualifications, subject methods, residential address, mode of transport and high school attended.

This information is used by the Work Integrated Learning Office to allocate students to a suitable school for their placement if they require assistance in sourcing a placement.

Note: If you are currently employed at a school or a school has confirmed to support your Special Education placement, please email professionalexperience@unsw.edu.au with the following details as soon as you have enrolled into the course.

- Name of School
- Name and email details of the School Coordinator
- Relationship with the school
    - Currently employed at the school
    - Acquired through professional contacts
    - Other (If other, please elaborate)

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal / Director of Studies

Where a Special Education student is placed in a mainstream school or other educational organisation, they fall under the administrative responsibility of the principal (or equivalent) and the mentor teacher allocated to them. The principal holds executive responsibility for educational quality and equity for the placement, advocates for school/university partnerships, and ensures appropriate support for the special education student. They also ensure supervisors are suitably experienced and skilled and is responsible for decisions related to grievances or harassment claims, resolving disputes, and placement termination.

Mentor Teacher

Mentors may include principals, deputy principals, special education teachers, coordinators, and other qualified colleagues. They are responsible for observing the Special Education student during their Professional Practice and are expected to model quality teaching, including strong subject knowledge, effective planning and assessment, and sound interpersonal and communication skills.

- Observe and provide quality feedback to the Special Education Student and engage in post-lesson reflections
- Provide opportunity for the Special Education Student to observe one or more other experienced teacher/s
- Sign the Special Education Student's attendance record for every day the student attends (totalling 25 days)
- Complete the Evidence of Professionalism report at the conclusion of the placement

Note: Payment is offered for mentor teachers and coordinators. Please navigate to the UNSW PEx website for further information on how to claim payment.

Special Education Student

Before placement

- Read through the EDST5118 pre-placement information pack, which is sent to students' UNSW email accounts after they enrol in the course.
- Contact the school coordinator before the commencement of their placement and provide all mandatory compliance documentation.
- Ensure you are well briefed on the WHS policies and procedures within the school.
- Arrange a school visit with the course coordinator if required.
- Ensure your course expectations are made explicit, including the importance of professional interaction and involvement with other staff and the broader school community.

During Placement

- Record notes and feedback on observed lessons. Observation notes must be submitted with the second assignment for review by the course coordinator.
- Choose lesson goals, create lesson plans for each lesson and complete the lesson feedback and reflection form.
- Complete the Self-Reflection Templates and the Reflective Problem-Solving Diary.
- Attend their assigned school for the required 25 days and participate in all aspects of the school program.
    - Any days that are missed must be made up in negotiation with the school. If, for any reason, you are unable to complete the required 25 days, please let your course coordinator, Joanne Danker, know as soon as possible at j.danker@unsw.edu.au.
- The attendance record must be signed by both the Special Education Student and the Mentor Teacher. The Special Education Student must submit all required documentation through Moodle.
- Communicate immediately with the course coordinator if any concerns arise.

After Placement

Placement Documentation Submission:

- The Special Education Student must ensure that the Attendance Record and Evidence of Professionalism have been completed and signed by the Special Education Student and the Mentor Teacher. These documents are to be submitted as part of a course assessment. Please review the EDST5118 Course Outline for further information.

Professionalism

Please remember that you are a guest in the school and are expected to act accordingly. Students should be punctual, use appropriate language, dress professionally, and respect the confidentiality of all personal and academic information. You are also required to uphold the school's culture and ethos, follow all school policies, and complete all tasks, forms, and compliance requirements (such as WWCC and UNSW training) by the specified deadlines.

Please ensure you follow the UNSW Code of Conduct and provide your mentor teacher with all necessary placement forms, including attendance records and placement reports, which are available in your EDST5118 Moodle or on the Professional Experience website.

Course Convenor/Liaison Officer

The Course Convenor oversees all Special Education Advanced Professional Practice placements in EDST5118 and will act as the liaison officer. Liaisons play an important role in supporting the learning of Special Education Students while on placement and are the first point of contact for school principals, professional experience coordinators, mentor teachers and special education students during the professional practice placement.

Liaisons maintain professional communication with the assigned placement school as required. These interactions may include:

- Contacting the school coordinator, mentor teacher, and Special Education student to introduce themselves as the primary point of contact during the placement, clarify roles and expectations, and arrange the liaison visit.
- Conduct a liaison visit, which typically involves discussions with the Special Education student and mentor teacher regarding the Special Education student's progress.

Concerns about performance

If there is concern the Special Education student will not meet the expected standards by the end of the placement, the student is at risk of failure. Please refer to the Concerns Regarding Student and, if required, the Process for Students Requiring Additional Support and/or At Risk of Failure documents to determine the next steps required.

There needs to be an open discussion with all concerned. The UNSW Liaison/Course Convenor should be contacted immediately. Often, timely intervention can lead to improved performance.

Unprofessionalism

In an extreme situation of demonstrated unprofessionalism, the university may withdraw the Special Education student immediately from the school or organisation.

This may happen if the Special Education student demonstrates:

1. Inability to cooperate with staff and work effectively in the school environment
2. Attitudes and actions antithetical to the profession of teaching
3. Absence from Special Education Professional Practice without adequate explanation or documentation

Schools can ask for a Special Education student to be withdrawn from the school based on unprofessional behaviour. Special Education students who receive an 'Unsatisfactory' grade due to unprofessionalism will need to “show cause” as to why they should be allowed to re-enrol. In the first instance, this is referred to the Course Coordinator, who may consult with the Head of School to determine further action.

Loss of Special Education Professional Practice due to industrial action of one day or part of a day that occurs in a school will need to be made up, as will any absences due to ill-health or carer responsibilities.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I find my placement documents?

For placement resources, including attendance sheets and reports, please refer to our Professional Experience Website.

When and where do I submit my placement attendance record and evidence of professionalism?

Placement forms are to be submitted to the course Moodle page as part of a course assessment. Please check your EDST5118 Course Outline for further information.

What if the Special Education Student cannot complete the 25 days in the allocated placement period?

If the special education student is unable to complete the required 25 days in the allocated placement period, please contact the liaison/ course coordinator, Joanne Danker, as soon as possible on j.danker@unsw.edu.au for further support.

I am already an accredited Australian teacher, teaching in a special education unit, do I need to complete this practicum?

Yes, the equivalent 25 days of teaching practice is a mandated component of any specialist teaching method for schools and adult educational institutions nationally.

Can I complete my placement with my own class?

Yes, special education students may complete the placement with their own class if there are students with disabilities (diagnosed or imputed).

I am not seeking accreditation as a special education teacher in an NSW Department of Education school. Can I substitute this course for another elective?

You may be able to substitute EDST5118 with another elective, subject to certain conditions. Please reach out to the School of Education via education@unsw.edu.au for further advice.

Placement Documents

Fillable PDFs of placement documents can be found on our UNSW PEx website.

Kindly be advised that the appended documents below are not fillable versions.

APPENDIX 1 - Special Education - Attendance Record

INSTRUCTIONS

This report is to be submitted as part of a course assessment; please refer to EDST5118 Course Outline for further information.

STUDENT DETAILS

Name		*Student ID*	
Mentor Teacher		*UNSW Program*	
School			

Please check appropriate boxes: ☐ *Advanced Professional Practice*

Please note in the event that a public holiday falls within the scheduled placement dates, the public holiday does not count towards the total number of professional experience days for the Special Education Student. In this case, please include the public holiday on this form.

Please record any absences on this form and mark the day 'absent'. Make sure to include the scheduled make-up day on this form as well. Include the total number of absences and negotiated make-up days in the relevant boxes below.

TEACHING, OBSERVATION AND OTHER DUTIES

Day	Date	Time In	Out	*MTS	Day	Date	Time in	Out	*MTS	Day	Date	Time In	Out	*MTS
Day 1					Day 18					Day 35				
Day 2					Day 19					Day 36				
Day 3					Day 20					Day 37				
Day 4					Day 21					Day 38				
Day 5					Day 22					Day 39				
Day 6					Day 23					Day 40				
Day 7					Day 24					Day 41				
Day 8					Day 25					Day 42				
Day 9					Day 26					Day 43				
Day 10					Day 27					Day 44				
Day 11					Day 28					Day 45				
Day 12					Day 29					Day 46				
Day 13					Day 30					Day 47				
Day 14					Day 31					Day 48				
Day 15					Day 32					Day 49				
Day 16					Day 33					Day 50				
Day 17					Day 34									

***Fourth Column named MTS = Mentor Teacher Signature**

Total days ☐ *Number of days absent* ☐ *Negotiated days of making up absences* ☐

NOTE: Please sign and date this form on the final day of the placement.

Student Signature		*Date*	
Mentor Teacher Signature		*Date*	

APPENDIX 2 - Special Education - Evidence of Professionalism

Instructions to MENTOR TEACHER
This report is to be completed after the student has completed their 25 days of professional practice. Students are to be assessed for each Standard/requirement as either: ***ND – Not Demonstrated; D – Demonstrated; E – Exceeds expectations (please tick)*** *Upon completion, this document is to be returned to the student for submission.*

Details of Student			
Name			
Student ID		*School/Organisation:*	
Supervising Teacher			
Date of Visit			

STANDARD 1 – KNOW STUDENTS AND HOW THEY LEARN	***ND***	***D***	***E***
1.1.2 Use teaching strategies based on knowledge of students' physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics to improve student learning.			
1.2.3 Expand understanding of how students learn using research and workplace knowledge.			
1.3.3 Support colleagues to develop effective teaching strategies that address the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.			
1.4.3 Provide advice and support colleagues in the implementation of effective teaching strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students using knowledge of and support from community representatives.			
1.5.3 Evaluate learning and teaching programs, using student assessment data, that are differentiated for the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.			
1.6.3 Work with colleagues to access specialist knowledge, and relevant policy and legislation, to develop teaching programs that support the participation and learning of students with disability.			

Comments:

STANDARD 2 – KNOW THE CONTENT AND HOW TO TEACH IT	***ND***	***D***	***E***
2.1.2 Apply knowledge of the content and teaching strategies of the teaching area to develop engaging teaching activities.			
2.2.2 Organise content into coherent, well-sequenced learning and teaching programs.			
2.3.2 Design and implement learning and teaching programs using knowledge of curriculum, assessment and reporting requirements			
2.4.2 Provide opportunities for students to develop understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.			
2.5.2 Apply knowledge and understanding of effective teaching strategies to support students' literacy and numeracy achievement.			
2.6.2 Use effective teaching strategies to integrate ICT into learning and teaching programs to make selected content relevant and meaningful.			

Comments:

STANDARD 3 – PLAN FOR AND IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING	***ND***	***D***	***E***
3.1.2 Set explicit, challenging and achievable learning goals for all students.			
3.2.2 Plan and implement well-structured learning and teaching programs or lesson sequences that engage students and promote learning.			
3.3.2 Select and use relevant teaching strategies to develop knowledge, skills, problem-solving, and critical and creative thinking.			
3.4.2 Select and/or create and use a range of resources, including ICT, to engage students in their learning.			
3.5.2 Use effective verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to support student understanding, participation, engagement and achievement.			
3.6.2 Evaluate personal teaching and learning programs using evidence, including feedback from students and student assessment data, to inform planning.			
3.7.2 Plan for appropriate and contextually relevant opportunities for parents/ carers to be involved in their children's learning.			

Comments:

STANDARD 4 – CREATE AND MAINTAINSUPPORTIVE AND SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS	***ND***	***D***	***E***
4.1.2 Establish and implement inclusive and positive interactions to engage and support all students in classroom activities.			
4.2.2 Establish and maintain orderly and workable routines to create an environment where student time is spent on learning tasks.			
4.3.2 Manage challenging behavior by establishing and negotiating clear expectations with students, and address discipline issues promptly, fairly and respectfully.			
4.4.2 Ensure students' wellbeing and safety within school by implementing school and/ or system, curriculum and legislative requirements.			
4.5.2 Incorporate strategies to promote the safe, responsible and ethical use of ICT in learning and teaching.			

Comments:

STANDARD 5 – ASSESS, PROVIDE FEEDBACK AND REPORT ON STUDENT LEARNING	***ND***	***D***	***E***
5.1.2 Develop, select and use informal and formal, diagnostic, formative and summative assessment strategies to assess student learning.			
5.2.2 Provide timely, effective and appropriate feedback to students about their achievement relative to their learning goals.			
5.3.2 Understand and participate in assessment moderation activities to support consistent and comparable judgements of student learning.			
5.4.2 Use student assessment data to analyse and evaluate student understanding of subject/content, identifying interventions and modifying teaching practice.			
5.5.2 Report clearly, accurately and respectfully to students and parents/carers about student achievement, making use of accurate and reliable records.			

Comments:

STANDARD 6 – ENGAGE IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	***ND***	***D***	***E***
6.1.2 Use the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and advice from colleagues to identify and plan professional learning needs.			
6.2.2 Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities.			
6.3.2 Contribute to collegial discussions and apply constructive feedback from colleagues to improve professional knowledge and practice.			
6.4.2 Undertake professional learning programs designed to address identified student learning needs.			
Comments:			

STANDARD 7 – ENGAGE PROFESSIONALLY WITH COLLEAGUES, PARENTS/CARERS AND THE COMMUNITY	***ND***	***D***	***E***
7.1.2 Meet codes of ethics and conduct established by regulatory authorities, systems and schools.			
7.2.2 Understand the implications of and comply with relevant legislative, administrative, organisational and professional requirements, policies and processes.			
7.3.2 Establish and maintain respectful collaborative relationships with parents/ carers regarding their children's learning and wellbeing.			
7.4.2 Participate in professional and community networks and forums to broaden knowledge and improve practice.			
Comments:			

PERSONAL LANGUAGE COMPETENCIES

The student can use the English language appropriately and accurately to communicate and manage interactions with students and colleagues effectively both inside and outside the classroom

Satisfactory ☐ ***Unsatisfactory*** ☐

Comments by Supervising Teacher

Please provide a comment on the degree of professional engagement that you observed in the ADVANCED student:

Supervising Teacher's name _____

Signature _____ ***Date*** _____

Student's name _____

Student's signature _____ ***Date*** _____

APPENDIX 3 - 25 Day Self-Reflection Template

Instructions: For each of the 25 days, students reflect and write a short paragraph on the following:

- *Goal: What was your goal for that lesson/day?*
- *Reality: What actually happened? Use data from student work samples, your observations or those of your peers.*
- *Options: Engage in critical reflection. Examine the student work samples and the evidence from the previous section. Did you achieve your goals? Cite evidence for this. If you taught this lesson again to this class, what would you do differently and why. What were the key moments in the lesson when you might have adapted your practice in response to the student learning happening at the time?*
- *What's Next: Consider the next steps for these students in the next lesson. What do you need to focus on in your next lesson with this class?*

Day 1
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 2
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 3
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*

Day 4
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 5
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 6
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*

Day 7
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 8
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 9
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 10
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*

Day 11
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 12
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 13
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 14
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*

Day 15
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 16
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 17
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 18
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*

Day 19
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 20
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 21
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 22
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*

Day 23
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 24
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*
Day 25
Goal: Reality *Options:* *What's Next:*

APPENDIX 4 - WIL002

Lesson Plan Template

INSTRUCTIONS

This Standard Lesson Plan Template is to be completed for every lesson taught during the Professional Experience Placement.

LESSON DETAILS

Teacher Education Student				***School***	
Lesson duration		***Topic***		***Date***	
Lesson Title/Focus					
Learning Intentions (at the end of this lesson students will… knowledge, skills, attitudes, understandings)					
Assumed Knowledge (i.e., topic, conceptual understandings, language structures and features, literacy and numeracy skills)					
Syllabus Outcomes					
Differentiation					
Resources					

TEACHING AND LEARNING SEQUENCE

Timing	*What teacher does and says*	*What students do and say*	*Assessment strategies*
Introduction			
Body			
Conclusion			
Lesson Reflection: Consider – purpose and outcomes achieved, student engagement, questioning and discussion points clearly articulated, grouping, catered for individuals, timing			

APPENDIX 5 - WIL003

UNSW School of Education Lesson Feedback and Reflection Form for Supervising Teacher and UNSW Liaison

Name of observer				*Supervising teacher* ☐ *University Liaison* ☐	
Course: *PE1* ☐ *PE2/Internship* ☐ *Advanced Professional Practice* ☐					
Teacher Education Student					
Date		***Year***		***Subject***	

UNSW Teacher Education Students highlight one to three criteria from the following graduate standard descriptors as their goals for this lesson. Please note these criteria are only a selection of criteria that can be assessed within a lesson and the ensuing post-lesson discussion. The complete set of graduate standard descriptors in the final report can be assessed using other artefacts such as lesson plans, professional conduct and interactions outside of the classroom. Consult these exemplars to calibrate the assessment of your proficiency.

Criteria	*Criteria*
Demonstrate understanding of research into how students learn and the implications for teaching (1.2.1)	*Evaluates and improve teaching plans (3.6.1)*
Knows content area (2.1.1)	*Supports student participation (4.1.1)*
Selects and organises content (2.2.1)	*Manages classroom activities (4.2.1)*
Structures and sequences lessons (2.3.1)	*Manages challenging behaviour (4.3.1)*
Demonstrate understanding of and respect for ATSI histories, cultures and languages (2.4.1)	*Assesses student learning (5.1.1)*
Incorporates literacy and numeracy strategies (2.5.1)	*Provides feedback (5.2.1)*
Establishes learning goals (3.1.1)	*Makes consistent and comparable teacher judgments (5.3.1)*
Uses a range of teaching strategies (3.3.1)	*Understand the relevant sources of professional learning for teachers (6.2.1)*
Uses effective classroom communication (3.5.1)	*Seek and apply constructive feedback from supervisors and teachers (6.3.1)*

REALITY

Give medal (what they did well) and mission (where next) feedback on the TES achievement of the 1- 3 goals for this lesson chosen from the above table. Discuss these judgments with the TES in the post-lesson conference that is a dialogue based on your judgments and their critical reflection on the lesson that refers to their impact on student learning.

OPTIONS (A POST-LESSON DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE OBSERVER AND THE TES)

Examine the evidence from the previous section as well as looking at student work samples if they are available. Use the following questions as a scaffold for the discussion.

Did you achieve your goal? Cite evidence of student learning.

If you taught this lesson again to this class, what would you do differently and why?

WHERE NEXT? (TO BE COMPLETED BY THE TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENT)

For these students in the next lesson…

For you as the teacher: what professional learning goal do you need to focus on in your next lesson with their class?