How to grow a social worker:
a comprehensive guide to student supervision

Louise Studdy, Mim Fox, Maree Higgins & Charlotte Smedley

Never Stand Still | Arts & Social Sciences | School of Social Sciences

How to grow a social worker: a comprehensive guide to student supervision

Louise Studdy, Mim Fox, Maree Higgins & Charlotte Smedley

Welcome to ‘How to grow a social worker: a comprehensive guide to student supervision’, a booklet designed to support professional social workers when supervising social work students on field placements, as a component of their qualifying social work degree. This booklet has been written by experienced field education staff that work regularly with social work students whilst they are undertaking their field placements. Throughout this booklet you will find interactive worksheets that we hope you will take into your supervision sessions with your students to aid their learning. In addition you will find some vignettes written by students and experienced university staff that serve to illustrate the field education journey. Although this is a comprehensive overview, if you are new to student supervision you don’t need to know everything all at once! Take your time reading this and use it as an ongoing resource throughout your time with your student.

In writing this booklet we would like to acknowledge the support of the School of Social Sciences at UNSW Australia, and all of the social work teaching staff and administrative staff who contributed both to this current edition and to this booklet over the preceding years. A special thanks also goes to the field educators Jenny Rose, Janelle Sayers and Natasha Weir, who contributed to an initial focus group in the development of the ideas for this booklet. Their views and perspectives were invaluable.

This booklet has been inspired by “How to grow a social worker: tips for field teaching”, originally authored by Robyn Bradey, Louise Studdy and Mick Hillman and edited over the years by Karen Heycox, Lesley Hughes and Elizabeth Fernandez.

In memory of Andrew Bain
and the support he provided in the writing of this booklet

Table of contents

Introduction

Supervising a social work student can be an enjoyable and rewarding addition to an already busy career. It requires specific skills, can be challenging at times, and is great preparation for future supervision of staff. The benefits of students are varied. They can bring energy, enthusiasm, curiosity and excitement about learning, while at the same time contributing to the workload of the agency. They often have more time than you to engage with clients and projects, can be a source of motivation to try new things in your work, and can remind us to reflect daily on our own practice. This reflection often leads to a more creative approach and a higher level of insight into our own work. Students can be enthusiastic, questioning, appreciative, and motivated to learn, and the energy from these students can positively influence the staff in your agency. Alternatively they could be shy or underconfident and take time to adjust to the professional setting, and the rewards may be seeing them grow as a professional.

It is understandable that you may wonder how you will juggle an already busy work schedule with a student. Some common concerns that new supervisors may have are:

How will I fit a student into my schedule?

It is important to review how you might accommodate the needs of a student into your schedule. If you are comfortable with a student observing your practice then you can be orientating them to your work and your agency from very early on in the placement. Students need time and attention but can assist with your workload if they are part of a well-planned orientation and placement plan. A long-term plan for the placement, coupled with ongoing assessment of the student's progress by the supervisor can assist in maximising both the student's capacity to learn and your capacity to teach. In addition, strategies such as co-supervision with a colleague can offer the student the benefits of two supervising personalities, making it easier to balance the workload.

I am not sure if I have the teaching skills needed

For some field educators, student supervision encompasses a new set of teaching skills that may need to develop over time, while for others their teaching skills from other roles will be invaluable. The combination of university support and the resources within your own agency provide guidance to you in this new role. Sometimes an agency colleague will offer to mentor you with your first student or the university will help with the provision of strategies or resources as you go along. This booklet will give you teaching strategies such as different ways of linking theory to practice or learning how to deal with challenging situations.

Will there be enough appropriate work for a student?

The workload for the student will vary depending on the timing of the placement. All universities offer at least two placements but there is a difference in the complexity and level of the workload between the first and second placement experience. However, if you are busy (find a social worker that isn't!) then it is likely there will be enough work. You will, however, need to think ahead and consider what type of work will be available. Think about setting this up before the placement starts, while keeping other colleagues in the agency informed about your ideas and on side. Always try to have some rainy day plans in case things change. If a student has a main task (e.g. a group, caseload or research project) and then a background task (review policy documents, help with intake) that should ensure there is always enough work for the student.

I do not know all the latest theory taught at university

Just because you are a competent practitioner does not mean you will automatically know how to teach a range of social work theories. Your role is to teach the theory or models that you know work well in your agency and, in turn, we hope you can learn from the student some relevant theory taught at the university that they bring to the agency. You are not expected to be teaching all the university theory, as the university staff will undertake this. You will be surprised how much you actually know and put into practice every day.

Just as your supervisors took up the challenge of having you on placement, so too will future social work students benefit from the fact you have started down the path of student supervision. This booklet aims to motivate you to do this with a positive approach, to equip you with some handy tips to make supervision easier, provide some creative techniques, and finally answer some of the common questions that can arise in the process.

If you are new to student supervision then we hope this booklet will give you the impetus to become involved in this great social work education adventure. If you are a more experienced field educator, then we hope that you can draw on the resources, diversify your techniques and be able to check that you are on the right track. Remember that the supervision skills you are developing or

already have in your toolkit are the perfect foundation for an ongoing commitment to student supervision.

The social work program at UNSW Australia thanks you for your commitment to social work field education and we wish you luck in your supervision journey.

Glossary

AASW: Australian Association of Social Workers (professional association)

ASWEAS: Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (most recently published by the AASW in 2013)

End-placement report: university assessment task jointly written by the field educator and student and submitted on completion of placement. Contained within this report is the field educator's recommended grade.

External supervisor: where a qualified social worker external to the agency provides supervision to the student. This usually occurs when the on-site supervisor's training is not recognised as social work training by the AASW (e.g. a non-social work degree or an overseas social work degree).

Field educator: student supervisor based in the placement agency.

Learning contract: written assessment that outlines the student's learning goals, student tasks on the placement, and the meeting of the AASW Practice Standards.

Liaison tutor: employed by the university to assess the student's learning throughout the placement and to provide support and additional resources as needed.

Mid-placement report: assessment jointly written by the student and the field educator at mid-point and submitted to the university.

Placement: the field education component of a qualifying social work degree, conducted in an agency (also referred to as practicum, prac or internship).

Practice Standards: AASW guidelines for standards of professional practice for all social workers in Australia (most recently published in 2013).

Social work qualification: A tertiary qualification that enables membership of the AASW. In Australia this qualification can either be gained with a Bachelor of Social Work or a Masters of Social Work (Qualifying).

Task supervisor: The day-to-day supervisor in the agency who provides guidance primarily around student tasks. This supervisor is not necessarily a qualified social worker. In this case there

is normally another field educator from a social work background who provides clinical supervision to the student (e.g. external supervision).

 : This symbol is used throughout to identify interactive worksheets for use with students in supervision.

Chapter 1: Taking your first student

It is normal to be a bit anxious about taking on your first student and you will have many questions such as:

1. How will you get them started?
2. How will you select appropriate work for them?
3. Will they learn quickly?
4. What is the best way to teach them?
5. Will you know the social work theories that they have learnt?
6. How will you juggle your normal workload while having to supervise a student?
7. Will the two of you get on?
8. How will you deal with any difficulties that may arise?
9. Will the staff environment be accepting of new students in the agency?

Field educator experience

First and foremost, in keeping with the Australian Association of Social Workers guidelines (AASW, 2013), you must have been in the field for two years before you can take a student. This is important, as it gives you a chance to settle into your professional role and find your feet as a social worker. It also ensures that those with the benefit of experience supervise the students.

Taking on the field educator role

Firstly you will need to prepare yourself for a change in your role. Moving from a practitioner to an educator involves a personal and professional shift in how you see yourself in the workplace, your skill set, and your areas of expertise. You need to consider how you will be a student supervisor, who will be a support person for you, and how you might need to adjust your current work load. Think about field educators you know or value who may give you some resources and ideas.

A great way to start as a first-time field educator is to have an experienced agency colleague act as a mentor or share the supervisory role as a co-supervisor. Prior to offering to be a supervisor, some social workers start by taking on a small role with a colleague's student e.g. supervising the student for 2 weeks whilst the main field educator is on leave or having the student involved in one activity or intervention with you. This way the progression is gentler and you can also see if you like the experience and feel you have something to offer.

Negotiation or advocacy on behalf of student involvement may be needed with your team or manager. If possible, students need to enter an environment that is welcoming and recognises their value, energy, ideas, and a willingness to give tasks a go. At times these tasks may be ones that staff are not as enthusiastic about doing, or just do not have the time to complete, the students therefore appearing incredibly useful! If your agency is not terribly positive about having a student, try to do some solid groundwork before the student arrives. Staff may have strong memories of a past 'difficult' student or may have had negative experiences themselves as students. Explain the reasons behind supervising a student, outlining the benefits to you as a professional as well as to the work of the agency.

Once your agency has agreed, the next step is to approach the university, if they haven't approached you first! Universities are always looking for new student placement offers, so your interest will be welcome.

What you need to tell the university:

1. Your qualifications and experience
2. Your current area of work
3. Tasks and learning available for the student
4. Whether you have the support of your agency and how a student would fit into your agency
5. Whether you have suitable accommodation and resources for them (e.g. a desk or computer)
6. Whether you will be absent for any part of the placement
7. How you might accommodate diversity (cultural, physical, linguistic, etc.)

Make it clear that this is your first student so the university takes this into consideration when they allocate a student to you. This could mean the university will streamline its choice of student, or it

could mean they will make a higher level of support available to you. Where possible meet all students interested in the placement prior to accepting them. This should be done ideally in person or by phone if you are based in a rural or regional agency.

The importance of the pre-placement interview

At this initial meeting it is important to clarify with the student the expectations of the agency and yourself as field educator. In addition you will want to find out what stage the student has reached in their learning and professional development.

Possible pre-placement interview questions

- ✓ Why does the student want this particular placement? Look for a genuine interest in the area and some understanding of what is involved in the social work and student role.
- ✓ How prepared is the student to take on the tasks assigned to them? Do they exhibit a willingness to engage with different professional activities?
- ✓ Has the student been engaged in any relevant voluntary or paid work that may assist their learning?
- ✓ Does the student speak any languages besides English, or have any special skills that could contribute to the placement?
- ✓ If they are a final year student, how did they find their previous placement experience? Was it enjoyable? Was it productive? What did they learn? How did they get on with their field educator? Did any significant issues arise?
- ✓ Has the student had any personal experiences that may make this particular placement a difficult environment in which to learn?

After meeting with the student, the field educator should reflect on:

- ✓ Do you think you could work with this student in your everyday environment?
- ✓ How would this student fit in with your colleagues and team?
- ✓ How does the student present? Nervous, anxious, confident? Are there any issues you can already identify?

Try to share any early concerns that you have about the student with the university. Once you have accepted the student on placement you need to start preparing yourself for the experience ahead of you.

Preparing for your new role as a field educator

1. Enrol in any seminars that the university runs for student supervisors. These seminars are designed to support you in your new role and will orientate you to the expectations of the university.
2. Talk with fellow social workers in your agency who have previously had students. Hear their practice wisdom so you can start to prepare yourself for what to expect.
3. Give some thought to your style as a supervisor and teacher, perhaps by reading some articles on student supervision.
4. Read the university guidelines for field placement so you understand their expectations of you.
5. Reflect on the theories you use in your everyday work and prepare appropriate reading material for the student.
6. Plan what the student will be doing on placement such as casework, projects, or community development. Draw up a list of tasks and learning opportunities.
7. Reflect on your own learning style, this will help you prepare to better support your student in the way they learn.

Chapter 2: Student orientation

Student orientation can take up to six weeks at the beginning of placement, with a steep learning curve happening in the first three weeks. The pace at which students absorb new information, begin to take on the role of learner and acclimatise to the agency will differ. Some basic principles of student orientation will assist this process.

The first few days

Plan the first few days before the student arrives. Think about what the student needs to know and how best to achieve this. Call on colleagues to assist so that the orientation is varied and interesting and the orientation load is shared amongst your team.

Allocate time on the first morning to welcome the student, introduce them to key people and set them up with a desk or work area. In case of a crisis where you could be called away, organise a backup colleague whom you know will be friendly and helpful.

Sit together with the student and clarify the required university documentation. Provide them with a copy of any pertinent agency literature including relevant services or policy documents, a name badge, keys or swipe card if required and other relevant items for your organisation. Show them how the phone works and how to access any secure areas with their ID badge. Also establish the best way to contact you during the day if you are not around.

When orientating your student remember:

- ✓ Don’t overload the student with information and check with them if they are following your explanations. Many students report that the new environment can be overwhelming, and they just cannot absorb all the detail given in that first week.
- ✓ Ask the student if they have any questions or concerns. Make them feel comfortable asking questions and alert them to the fact that you need to know if they need help or extra information. Encourage the student to take initiative by asking questions in this early stage.

- ✓ Make sure the student has a diary and provide some events or meeting details for them to insert. If your agency is large you may need to provide the student with a map or organisational chart.
- ✓ Make a time for the first formal supervision session where you can discuss the student role and tasks and the learning contract requirements.
- ✓ Give the student an overview of what you have planned for this first week and ask if they have any additional requests.
- ✓ Link your student with any other students in the agency as appropriate and if there are several social work students then co-plan with the other supervisors for activities during the orientation period.
- ✓ Once introductions have taken place, help the student settle in and give them some time to feel at home. Students need time to digest and familiarise themselves with the new environment in which they will be spending a lot of time so provide them with some reading material, such as agency brochures, the new staff or student handbook and any policy and procedures documents relating to the agency.
- ✓ Suggest that the student has a notebook in which they can record important information during the orientation week and beyond. Tell them that they will need to remember who is who and what is what so the book will assist them when they need to communicate with other staff or find something out in the agency. Suggest they start a glossary with common terms, acronyms and meanings. Ensure they have a safe, secure place to keep the book as it may have confidential names or notes in it.
- ✓ Encourage the student to write down all of the tasks they are asked to undertake with the names of the appropriate client / staff / agency to visit. In the orientation stage, memory can't always be relied upon, as the amount of new information the student is required to absorb sometimes makes the experience overwhelming!
- ✓ Ask the student to repeat back what you are asking them to do or describe their next task. Often students think they know what you mean but only realise later that they really did not follow your instruction. You need to make sure you are preparing your student for the professional world of social work, so take time when explaining tasks and make sure they understand.
- ✓ If possible have lunch with them on the first day or ask them to join with everyone in the staff room. This is a good opportunity for them to meet the other staff in a relaxed environment and to begin talking informally about what they will be doing on placement.
- ✓ Reassure students that mistakes are a normal part of learning and if they make a mistake this can usually be remedied.

The first week

Students often arrive a bit anxious but excited to be finally doing something in the real world of social work. Try to make the first week a positive one with room for them to express themselves

but with enough structure for them to realise that some preparation has taken place. Avoid leaving the student for long periods to read agency documents, such as the policy and procedures manual, even if some of this has to be read! The reading can happen slowly over time, peppered with interactive experiences in the agency.

Many students really like shadowing their supervisor in the initial days of their placement. When your workload requires that you need to see clients or attend meetings in these early days, if it is appropriate, bring the student in as an observer. Always clarify for the student from the outset what they are attending and what their role entails. A mixture of set activities plus some impromptu ones is a nice balance. You may ask a colleague to talk about the agency and their role but you may also take up the opportunity of the student shadowing you or one of your colleagues if appropriate.

By day 3 check how the orientation is going. If the student shows initiative and some competence then suggest they book a few appointments for themselves. A good initial appointment could be with the senior social worker or agency manager to hear about their role in the agency. Finding where staff members are located is a great orientation in itself and students quickly learn their way around an agency. Make sure the student is using their journal to reflect on what they are seeing and hearing, especially if it is confronting or challenging to them.

Be in touch with your student

All students are different. Some will show initiative from the start and can be relied upon to ask questions, recognise opportunities and perhaps exhibit appropriate levels of self-confidence. Other students will be quiet, shy and benefit from taking a little longer to find their footing. However, whether your student is outgoing or shy, try to involve and engage them early in their placement with appropriate tasks.

Observe how they learn to see if they have a visual (learn through seeing things), auditory (learn through hearing things) or tactile (learn through doing things) dominance. If you are able to identify the type of learner your student is, you can begin to strategise and individualise your teaching. It is easy to try to protect the less confident student from taking responsibility (especially if they express fear of “messing up”) but do not allow them to hide from what will become their placement tasks. One way to facilitate this discussion is for both of you to identify your learning styles then discuss it during supervision. You may both have very different learning preferences.

Keep tasks simple but clarify why they are doing it and what they need to remember. Some examples could be:

- ✓ Casework placement: send them to introduce themselves to a client and give them a small task to achieve (e.g. set up a time for an assessment or fill out a form).
- ✓ Community work placement: send them to a local service to collect some basic information or introduce themselves to key stakeholders in the community.
- ✓ Research and policy placements: provide them with relevant and brief documents and ask them to read and summarise a section that will assist their learning.

Supervision in the orientation stage

It is important to set up the supervisory relationship and expectations right from the beginning of placement. There is a great deal for students to absorb in the early part of placement as they are often engaged in activities, which mean they may face issues that they have never encountered before. This can be achieved through a supervision contract where expectations for both student and supervisor are discussed and outlined. Discuss how you will record or take notes of supervision sessions, and how these records will be kept.

Activities such as reading client files or observing interviews can be challenging for students, so it is important to check out their level of understanding, become aware of any gaps in their knowledge or lack of understanding about issues so you can determine how comfortable they are feeling in these situations. Emphasise to the student the need for debriefing and offer to be available for informal supervision if and when it's required.

Try to keep the planned formal supervision times and if they need to change, make sure they are rescheduled so the student has the guidance they need. By checking in regularly with the student you are likely to pick up on any issues or problems as they arise. If you have any concerns about the progress of the student, make sure you ring the university as soon as you realise there may be an issue. Problems that are ignored don't usually disappear, instead they require early intervention.

Developing student resources

A student folder or file in the agency is a great idea to assist with your student orientation. If you have had previous students then ask them to photocopy relevant materials to leave behind for the next student. This way you always have a copy of useful material and they can even add to the file by writing their own 'helpful hints' for the next student. For your first student, find a few relevant articles or pamphlets and place them in a folder, which can be used as part of their orientation. You can add to this as the placement progresses and it will become a useful resource for you as the supervisor, as well as for current and future students.

Ideas for your orientation folder:

- ✓ An example of a typical client assessment, report templates or community events
- ✓ Information for new staff or students to the agency or the local area
- ✓ Articles on specific issues, for example dementia if working with older people
- ✓ Articles on social work methods or practice that are dominant in your field. Some examples could be community development or counselling methods

Orientation worksheet: bringing your agency policy to life

Courtesy of Louise Studdy

This exercise is an easy and helpful one to get your student to engage more with agency policy. It can be done when the student has been on placement 15-20 days and has some understanding of one particular policy that impacts their practice. One advantage of it is that the student has a chance to share their view of the current policy and how they think it could be improved or changed. Use the questions below to guide a discussion in supervision.

1. Name a policy or part of a policy that impacts your practice.

2. In your own words explain what this policy or part of the policy states.

3. Who wrote the policy? Government? Agency? Board?

4. How does this policy affect your role/practice in the agency?

5. How does this policy impact any clients/groups/community served by the agency?

6. Can you link this policy to the AASW Code of Ethics? How?

7. Do you have any difficulties with this policy? Is it unfair to some clients or potential clients? Does it favour some client groups over others?

8. How would you rewrite this policy if you had the chance? Why? Be specific. What might you add to the policy?

Chapter 3: Allocating work to the student

A common question often asked by new supervisors is how to decide on work allocation in order to maximise learning and to make the placement interesting. If you are a first-time field educator aim to establish a plan of relevant tasks for the first 3-4 weeks, on the understanding that this can be amended as you go. If you have had previous students in this agency then review plans that have worked before. It's important to be critical by adding the wisdom of afterthought ("I should have done that earlier") and amend the plan according to the individual student coming and the nature of work for this placement.

An important question to ask yourself is what do you hope the student will achieve by the end of orientation, by the mid-placement point and by the end of placement?

Developing learning goals

1. Consult with the student at the pre-placement interview then again in the first week. Do they have any passions or interests they want to follow throughout the placement? Do they bring any special skills with them to the placement, such as computer or web skills, music or art? Do they have client experience, such as volunteering with young people, or do they speak a second language?
2. Consult with your colleagues. How would they like to be involved in the placement? How can they complement what you are offering? Do they have tasks that they would like to share, such as a small project they are keen to undertake? Or could they have your student on their team for a specified time to offer diversity to the placement? Perhaps they run a group with which they would be happy for student to be involved.

3. Consult with other field educators you know, either internal or external to your agency. If you're in doubt regarding the appropriateness of what you plan to offer speak to the university and find out if your plan is feasible. Does it fit with what a first or second placement student needs to learn?

Try not to feel that you have to do it all on your own and allow yourself to be part of a community of field educators.

Brainstorm potential learning goals

Either by yourself or in your professional team, brainstorm possible learning goals that you could see being relevant to the placement. Some examples of learning goals that field educators have stated include:

- ✓ By mid-placement the student can conduct an assessment of a client or a family, with field educator support or on their own
- ✓ In a group that runs for six sessions, by session four the student can take responsibility for a specific task
- ✓ Our student will have completed the draft research question by the1st June
- ✓ By April 10th the student will have drafted the poster for a Seniors Day event at the agency
- ✓ The literature search is due to be completed by March 20th, or Week 5 of placement
- ✓ By mid-placement the student should be participating in meetings with residents and the local community

Developing a draft work plan for the student

By developing a draft work plan for the student you are being proactive about planning for their arrival. You might discuss the draft work plan with your own supervisor or a colleague who may also be taking a student. Remember it is only a draft and should be evaluated with the student's input.

1. Include learning goals in the draft work plan. For example, understanding how the agency works or understanding how our agency works within the principles of community development.
2. Strategies to achieve this learning goal may be to include attending planning meetings, discussing agency policy in supervision, making links to community development theory, or spending time with each team member.
3. Where you can, try to include a timeline or dates in the draft work plan. These can be subject to change but it helps to have an initial timeframe in mind.
4. Remember that this is only a draft and is subject to change over time!

Example of a draft work plan

Week 1	• Orientation to the agency and to the placement • Hold first supervision session • Review university documents together • Student begins shadowing as appropriate, for example sitting in on client interviews • Include important dates in both the field educator and student diary • Introduce the student to all key agency staff • Student to start completing their journal entries • Student to begin reading the agency handbook or local policies and procedures
Week 2	• Continue agency orientation as needed • Student begins to take on basic tasks • Student works on university learning contract • Student observes field educator or other staff in client interviews and meetings • Student begins background reading for research or project placement • Student is proactive in identifying interests and possible learning opportunities • In supervision field educator looks at an early draft for learning contract and contributes to its development with a view to completion by end of second week
Week 3	• The orientation is complete • Student is now familiar with staff and agency policy • Student is undertaking more placement tasks with field educator available for informal supervision • Formal supervision is now established in a regular pattern • Field educator checks in with the student as to how they think the placement is progressing and whether the learning opportunities and tasks are appropriate • At this point consider contacting the university if any concerns have arisen

After you have created the draft work plan, the student will then have a learning contract that needs to be completed for the university in conjunction with you as the field educator. Having already undertaken this work, when the student starts to write their learning contract, you will really be able to assist them with the opportunities available and strategies to learn, because you will have already done some serious thinking around the subject!

When writing work plans or learning contracts remember:

- ✓ Share your plans with your student. Show them you are professional and take their placement seriously. Your student will work better if there is direction at the beginning of the placement.
- ✓ Do not think "it will all fall into place once they arrive". Preliminary and preparatory thinking allows for a structured beginning to the placement rather than an environment of learning in chaos.
- ✓ Mark key dates and events in your diary and have the student do the same. Make a list of activities that you think will be appropriate for your student. This could include interagency meetings, community consultations, home visits, staff meetings, issue specific training days, court visits etc.
- ✓ Plan your teaching and learning milestones or learning goals. What might your student want to achieve and by when?
- ✓ Think of a number of topics or themes that you would like to see discussed in student supervision (e.g. multi-disciplinary team work, anti-racist practice, ethical dilemmas in your practice, etc.). By planning this in advance you can do any preparation work you might think necessary. Always remember as well as the planned schedule unexpected opportunities for student learning will arise so you need to be flexible with your approach.

Task analysis worksheet: process recording

Process recording sheet adapted from Cleak & Wilson, 2013, p.84, Making the Most of Field Placement, Third Edition, Cengage Learning

Process recording is a reflective learning tool which aids student reflection and is most beneficial when applied to individual and family work. Process recordings provide a clear structure to the reflective and analytical process. When using the process recording sheet remember:

1. Ask the student to select only 5-10 minutes of an interview to analyse.
2. Have the student complete two process recordings during the placement once they have started doing individual client work and are comfortable with this tool.
3. The student can complete it in full or using abbreviated sentences and to speed up the process, try using initials for you and the client. You can also make use of open columns so that the student is not limited to trying to fit it all into a pre-set box.
4. Ask the student to complete the sheet as soon as the interview is completed and to provide as much detail as possible. The content dialogue should encompass what the client and the social work student actually said, as closely as possible. Encourage students to take notes through the interview to assist this process later, or get permission from the client to record the interview.
5. Students need to be able to highlight what emotions and / or feelings they experienced at different points in the segment selected. This can include anxiety about what to say next, relief when the client opens up, sadness at what the client expresses, etc.
6. Complete the student's assessment of the client's feelings. This is what the student assessed their client to be feeling and can include what the client said (for example, "I am angry") or what the student thought they might be feeling but was not verbalised. An optional addition is to add in a comment column for their observation of their client's non-verbal behaviour.
7. Student knowledge and skills demonstrated. This section includes what the student thinks they used or did and identifies the theory and/or knowledge drawn from.
8. Even though process recordings take time for the student to complete, and for you the supervisor to read, their value outweighs the effort as they encourage focussed reflection by the student.
9. You can use taped or videoed interview segments alongside the process recording sheet. What is really important is that the student can see how they worked, what they did well and where they need to improve with skills and knowledge. You can help by suggesting how they can improve these areas.
10. Once the process recording sheet is completed by the student and the field educator has commented on it, it should be brought to supervision and used as a discussion and reflective tool.

Process recording worksheet

Name of student: _____

Client's name: _____

Date of interview: _____

Content dialogue	Student's feelings	Client's feelings	Knowledge used or skills demonstrated	Comments students / supervisor

Chapter 4: Assessment

Making assessment easier for you and the student

Placement assessment has two components: the formative component (ongoing assessment which mainly occurs in the supervisory and task-based relationship) and summative (through formal university assessment pieces and processes). Even though the placement is punctuated by key assessment documents, assessment needs to take place from as soon as you meet the student, and then throughout the placement. Placement assessment therefore must be viewed as an ongoing process.

Ongoing field educator assessment of student

Stages of placement	**Assessment of the student**
Pre-placement interview	Upon meeting the student for the first time the field educator is already assessing: a) Professional manner and presentation of the student b) Commitment to the placement experience c) Student's ability to articulate relevant learning goals d) Quality of the match between the student's learning needs and the placement's teaching capacity and environment
Placement commences	The first few weeks of the placement is orientation and in this time the field educator is assessing how the student learns and behaves in a professional setting. Supervision in this stage is primarily about the integration of this orientation and the developing of

	learning goals for the learning contract.
University contacts field educator and student to make initial contact, screen for issues, and organise mid-placement assessment visit	Field educator shares initial assessment of how student is progressing, including professional orientation to the workplace and initial approach to learning goals.
Learning contract submitted to university	Field educator is assessing the quality of the written work and the relevance of the learning goals to the individual student's learning needs and the placement context.
Regular formal supervision with student continues throughout the placement	Field educator is regularly sharing with the student their assessment of their progress and any concerns that have been identified. As placement reaches the mid-point, a supervision session focuses on the student's progress to date and preparation for the summative assessment pieces: the mid-placement visit and the mid-placement report.
Mid-placement point	The university representative conducts the mid-placement visit at the agency with a major focus on the summative assessment of the student and the progress of their learning goals, as stated in their learning contract. The mid-placement report is submitted to the university, including field educator comments on the progress of the student's learning in line with the AASW Practice Standards. Learning goals for the second half of the placement are to be regularly referred to by the field educator and student throughout the remainder of the placement.
Concluding contact by the university representative to the field educator and the student. If the student is not progressing with their learning goals there may at this point be further follow up by the university representative.	The field educator is asking, are the learning goals for the second half of placement being achieved? The field educator at this point is communicating with the university representative about what their assessment is now, and what is good enough learning for this student in this particular placement.
Preparation for end-placement report	The field educator and the student hold a supervision session to facilitate the writing of the end-placement report for the university. The field educator provides the

	student with a final assessment of their progress on their learning goals since the mid-placement visit and the content of the end-placement report is thoroughly reviewed.
Placement concludes	The student's capacity to end an engagement with their placement and their student tasks is assessed by the field educator and reflected in the end-placement report. The field educator completes the end-placement report for the university with a recommendation for the final academic grade.

In order to support this ongoing assessment process, field educators should create for themselves an assessment kit. Your assessment kit needs:

- A copy of all the key placement dates including start date, finish date, and dates when university assessments are due.
- A supervision notebook or folder for you to make progress notes regarding your student. Notes can include student qualities, existing skills, areas needing particular focus, and student interests, plus ideas about the learning you envisage them undertaking. You will appreciate having made notes as you approach mid-placement assessment.
- Print-outs of key university documents including the assessment templates (learning contract, mid and end-placement reports and mid-placement visit guidelines).
- Key contacts including the university representatives, placement coordinators and relevant field educators.
- Include in your folder a print out of key student input and communication. Also a summary of each supervision session can be helpful, so both the field educator and the student have a quick guide for tasks set and topics discussed.

Remember when assessing your student:

- ✓ Liaise regularly with any agency staff involved with your student for feedback on their progress.
- ✓ Familiarise yourself with the AASW Practice Standards (2013), as they inform the university assessment pieces. These can be used in supervision sessions as a benchmark document.
- ✓ See how your assessment of your student's skills, knowledge and values compares with how they see themselves. This should be done well before the visit as it is not uncommon for students to rate themselves higher than their field educator, and this can then be a source of concern for the student.
- ✓ Stress that learning to be an effective social worker is ongoing after graduation, and that effective practice is constantly evaluating the way we engage with our work.

- ✓ Try to be tactful but clear when giving negative feedback. Always identify the steps the student can take to improve their practice.
- ✓ Tackle any issues early. Early intervention is a sound principle, even in student supervision!
- ✓ Remember to tell your student what they are doing well and why. Don't assume they know this about themselves.

Ways to maximise the outcome of the mid-placement assessment visit

1. **Review the learning contract with your student** and make succinct notes on areas achieved and areas that need change or deletion. If a project is not going ahead, a different type of group will be running, or the nature of the research has altered (as often happens!) you need to clarify this for the liaison tutor as they will be using the learning contract as their guide for the mid-placement visit.
2. **List particular tasks that need focus before the end of placement**. Students often focus more on what has been completed and learnt rather than what is to come. This is understandable as the mid-placement assessment needs to be thorough and a numbered rating is involved. It is hard for some students to look beyond this grade-based process but you should help them to think of what needs to be achieved now in terms of skill, knowledge, values and confidence. For some students this may be easier to identify as gaps have already been identified and you can see what they need to do to pass. For other students you may find they give you the lead by articulating goals such as, "I want to become more competent using an interpreter", "I want to lead a group session on my own if I can", or "I want to be able to take a leadership role in a community session".
3. **Be thorough with your supervision documentation as this can be used to inform the mid-placement visit discussion**. As discussed, you should be taking notes as you go either during or following a supervision session and record feedback to you from other staff, particularly if there are areas of concern. This process can benefit both the placement assessment at the time, and the student's professional development in the future. In addition it can help you review your own development as a student supervisor and improve your own practice.
4. **Raise concerns early with the university**. Speak with the university representative before the visit regarding any concerns in order to avoid surprises for the student or liaison tutor. It can be a difficult process for the student to be told in front of the liaison tutor that they are not currently passing if they have not had prior warning of this. Brainstorming the handling of these issues prior to the mid-placement visit can mean a supportive learning space for the student is created.
5. **Raise any questions or clarifications you have with the university representative**. Prepare notes and questions for the mid-placement visit in advance and use the visit to gain tips on how you can help the student better. Take on board positive feedback you

receive from either the liaison tutor or the student and be mindful of areas where you can improve in your student supervision. Remember that the liaison tutor is an educational resource for you so strategising about how to maximise the learning for your student can be an added bonus to the process.

6. **Highlight the student's strengths and skills**. Even if issues have arisen with your student remember to use a strength-based approach in highlighting any gains they have made in their learning. Every student has areas in which they can improve, but also every student has had some success that should be acknowledged. The mid-placement visit is the perfect time to celebrate these successes so that the student is inspired for the second half of their placement.

Difficulties that can impact on the mid-placement visit

1. A lack of time: Typically mid-placement visits take at least 1-1.5 hours to thoroughly assess the student's progress. Field educators, students and liaison tutors need to ensure they have put enough time aside to not feel rushed with the process. Despite being in a busy work place, try to arrange that you are not interrupted during this time.
2. The student, the field educator or the liaison tutor is unprepared. All parties need to have read the guidelines and prepared their input prior to the mid-placement visit.
3. The mid-placement visit is too early or too late in the placement. At times liaison tutors are visiting multiple students and so not all students can be assessed at exactly mid-point. The important thing to remember is that the student should be assessed at the right time for them when enough work has been undertaken so that a proper assessment can be made.
4. The field educator and / or student are aware that there are issues with how the placement is progressing but are hesitant to discuss them in this forum. An open three-way discussion can sometimes be confronting for either the field educator or the student so both parties need to work separately with the liaison tutor to make sure the issues are being resolved.
5. It is not uncommon for one party to feel isolated in the discussion. This could be because:
    a. Discussion primarily occurs between two of the parties.
    b. One party is not recognising the value of the discussion.
    c. The student or field educator feels "on show" with the focus on what they can verbally contribute to the discussion, especially if they do not feel confident with their verbal skills.
    d. The student or field educator experiences a fear of failure, so plays it safe by limiting how much they tell the liaison tutor.

The aim of the mid-placement visit is for all parties to feel heard and supported in the learning experience. At times giving students feedback on their progress can be difficult and the field educator needs to prepare for this experience.

Giving students feedback

Feedback is a crucial part of the assessment process but while some students may find it hard to ask for feedback, some field educators will find it hard to give it. Students are encouraged to take initiative with all aspects of their learning, including asking for feedback at placement. While some students may find this difficult, other students may regularly ask their field educator how they are progressing. Remember that when it comes to feedback, every student is different.

General principles for giving feedback:

1. Feedback is easier when the student is used to receiving it and the field educator is used to giving it. Try to provide regular feedback to your student on:
    a. What they are doing well
    b. What they need to do better
    c. How they might achieve this
2. Have clear feedback notes prepared for your supervision sessions. Try to:
    a. Be constructive with feedback (positive with areas of learning)
    b. Refer back to the learning contract as needed
    c. Ask how best as the field educator you can support their learning i.e. more of X or less of Y
3. Even if your student is capable, confident and seems to be handling the work well, give them this feedback. Often the student needs to be told clearly how they are progressing.
4. Make your feedback specific by commenting on the completed tasks, such as a completed psycho-social assessment, a group session plan, a draft agenda for a residents' meeting at a housing estate, or a process recording of an interview. Provide concrete feedback and reference to the development of a specific social work skill. For example, "that was a good report showing accurate assessment and using non-judgmental language".

For students who tend not to ask for feedback, provide some suggested questions they can use and encourage them to ask both you and any co-students for input and ideas. Remind them that critical reflection is needed to practice effectively. Some examples of structured questions could be:

- ✓ How could I have handled that interview or group session better?
- ✓ I want my questions to elicit more client disclosure, how might I do this?
- ✓ My project writing seems too simple, how do I make it sound more professional?

Obviously it is easier to give positive feedback than negative feedback but your students will need both!

Strategies to deliver constructive feedback

All students will need to receive feedback that challenges them throughout their placement. Regardless of the nature of the feedback, the aim is to maximise student growth and minimise any negativity or distress involved. Some important points to remember:

- ✓ Pick a time soon after the incident in question (interview, group or presentation) and ask the student how they think they went with the task. Give them a chance to share their perceptions, and jot down a few notes including how the student views the situation.
- ✓ Try to combine the negative feedback with something positive. For example, "it was good that you introduced yourself so clearly to the couple, however I felt there were some important questions missing from your assessment".
- ✓ Speak honestly but remember to be supportive, especially if you are not sure how sensitive they will be to feedback. Some students have a harder time hearing feedback about their learning than others.
- ✓ Clearly identify the skill or behaviour that is of concern so the student can see you helping them improve their professional behaviour.
- ✓ Role-play the incident if you can, so the student has a chance to practise and try again with your support.
- ✓ Try using a rating scale (1-5, 1-10) where the lower number is not very confident and the higher numbers are more confident. Ask the student to rate themselves on a particular skill and where they think they are now. Then ask them to identify where they would like to be by mid- or end of placement. You can then rate them on where they are currently located on the scale and discuss your expectations of their progress. This is a good starting point for a direct discussion about performance.
- ✓ Provide concrete information on how the student can improve with this skill or behaviour.
- ✓ If you notice that the student is not taking on board your suggestions, raise it again with them. Remember they may not have fully comprehended the nature of the problem or they may not understand how to change their behaviour.
- ✓ Make sure you document and date all of these discussions so you can feed this back to the university as a part of your overall assessment. Ensure that the student writes some key points about your discussion at the time, including what they need to work on and how they might do this.

Assessment at the end-placement point

Many field educators and students find that the second half of placement goes quickly. As students grow in confidence and competence they are likely to work faster, take on more complex tasks and be less dependent on their field educator. It can come as a surprise to some field educators that the placement is soon drawing to an end, so try to ensure that you have a timely and productive supervision session with your student discussing their progress. Make sure to include areas that still need focus so that there is enough time to complete tasks before the placement ends and the end-placement report is due.

When approaching the end-placement point remember:

1. In supervision review the goals for the second half of placement that you and the student included in the mid-placement report.
2. Review the notes that you made in your supervision folder since the mid-placement visit. Refresh your memory regarding the growth your student has made throughout the placement. You will be glad you took some notes over these few months!
3. Consider whether the goals set at the mid-placement visit have been achieved and if not, why not?
4. Reflect on the strengths and assets your student currently possesses and consider:
    a. What particular areas will still need focus in the future?
    b. Recollect examples of these areas to include in the end-placement report.
5. Try to avoid writing in the report any negative feedback that you have not already shared with your student. It is too disappointing for a student to learn something negative from you when there is little time left to discuss or clarify such feedback. Completing a placement should be about tying up loose ends and finishing off. It is also important to try to work through any unfinished business that either of you have experienced.
6. The end-placement report for the first placement should contain your comments regarding areas of focus for the next placement. If this is the final placement and the student is finishing their degree after completing, then comments relating to them working as a graduate will be appropriate for the end-placement report.

Mid-placement worksheet: analysing contemporary policy topics on placement

Courtesy of Maree Higgins

This worksheet is useful when the student has been on placement for at least 40 days or so, and can be used in the lead up to the mid placement assessment. This is great to do either individually or with groups of students, as the students can challenge one another to think more deeply about the issues. The aim of this worksheet is to structure your student's understanding of the policy context in which your agency sits, to encourage the student to articulate their views and identify how these are consistent or inconsistent with the knowledge and values of the agency and the wider community, and to help the student to look outside their own team or project and see the 'bigger picture'.

This worksheet is in two parts, and preferably should be completed two weeks apart. Both parts can be done in supervision, with the student taking it away in between to work on.

Part 1	1. Brainstorm with your student their ideas about the legislation, procedural and policy knowledge on which they are drawing during placement. 2. Ask your student to describe, from their working knowledge and without reference to any materials, the main parts of the legislation, procedures and policies. It is acceptable if they make mistakes and take time to put pieces of the puzzle together at this stage. 3. Ask your student to imagine a media contact rang them to discuss a hot issue in your agency. 4. Ask them to clarify what the issue might be. Then ask them to think about what pieces of information might be relevant and get them to identify what they need to find out more about. 5. Set them the task of finding informative newspaper or journal articles they can read to develop their knowledge around this topic and to collect any other pieces of information they can access (Code of ethics, agency manuals, other guidelines). 6. Also ask other colleagues what they think about the issues personally and professionally (if possible).
Part 2	In the next supervision session have your student present for 5 minutes. Ask them to: 1. Briefly describe the issue. 2. Describe what they now know about this issue. Outline their personal and professional views on this hot topic. If possible take a role, such as 'average joe' or 'media rep' and feedback to the student – are you convinced? Are there gaps? What would you like to know more about?

Chapter 5: Student supervision

Regular social work supervision is a key part of a successful student placement. As a field educator you have so much experience to offer a student but this should be shared in a way that is interesting and accessible. Additionally, many field educators agree to take students on top of their own work load. There is a real skill in juggling your own work with the supervision of students!

Supervision arrangements should be discussed and agreed upon in the first week of placement with the arrangement being met by both student and field educator. Any agreement should include the frequency of sessions, time allocated for supervision, informal and formal structure of supervision, the chosen format of supervision, what the student should prepare for supervision, the use of agendas within supervision, additional supervisors involvement, and the expectations of the student within the supervisory relationship.

Frequency

The AASW require 1.5 hours per week of supervision for every 35 hours of placement (AASW, 2013). Each university will allow for different arrangements for this requirement however, ideally this time should occur in one slot and should be seen as ‘formal supervision’. Informal supervision will complement this and is likely to be an important way to develop the supervisor-student relationship. Informal supervision can involve quick questions, casual discussion in the car after a joint home visit or community meeting, or debriefing about the day’s events. You need to be seen as accessible but with professional boundaries so that the student will learn that there are times you cannot be interrupted.

Time

Scheduling a definite time for supervision each week or fortnight commits both parties to be there and establishes supervision as a priority in the calendar. Organising a time from week to week can get messy as you and the student can become busy and you may find that supervision is the first thing you will put off. At least a full hour of formal supervision is advisable as this gives you time to discuss issues at length and in depth.

Informal and formal structure

A mixture of both informal and formal supervision works well in the intensive teaching and learning environment of a placement. A totally informal approach to supervision restricts the capacity for in-depth discussion of placement issues and the student's ability to integrate theory with practice. However a totally formal approach can be daunting and can have an impact on the warmth of the supervisory relationship. Every student will have times when they need to approach their supervisor informally when a problem arises. If you aren't going to be available for a period of time, there needs to be a clear understanding about whom the student can approach in your absence. This should be clarified in the learning contract at the beginning of the placement.

Format of supervision

The format of supervision will vary from student to student and from week to week but having clarity about the overall format will help to achieve the maximum possible in the time allowed. Remember that keeping a record of the content of supervision is useful as it allows for reflection on the process and also supports the completion of university reports.

Some useful ideas to include in the supervision format:

- ✓ Review of your student's placement tasks, such as current cases or project updates.
- ✓ A discussion of any problems arising from these tasks or other issues for the student or field educator.
- ✓ Field educator observations about how the student is progressing and feedback from other staff that have been working with the student.
- ✓ A case study or issue discussion based around theory, values or feelings.
- ✓ A plan of work for the next week.

Working within this framework allows the student to bring written work for discussion and be set appropriate reading material. Obviously if there is a particular problem area or specific issues have been raised then supervision should focus on this. It is tempting for supervision to be taken up solely with debriefing and some weeks you may find that the hour could be consumed just talking about a challenge the student has faced only to find there is little time left to address other necessary areas. Allowing space in each supervision session for educational development and administrative management will enrich a student's learning. Try to allocate time on the agenda for different areas to ensure all facets of the placement are addressed.

The learning contract

The learning contract is the assessment piece that initially directs the specific areas of learning for the student, the nature and format of supervision, as well as outlining the task completion for the assessment process. For some universities this is one of the documents that is used by the university representative (liaison tutor) to assess your student at the mid-placement visit.

The learning contract has a relationship with the AASW Practice Standards, and this is a way for you both to make sense of the work tasks in a professional practice context. The learning contract is usually due within the first two weeks of placement and completing it in the required timeframe can be a challenge for both student and field educator.

The learning contract can specifically be a challenge on a first placement. In this situation, the student is new to the agency and may not really understand the learning opportunities available let alone what might be relevant to them. Your role as a supervisor is to guide them as to what you think they will be able to be involved in, and give feedback on their draft document.

Included in the learning contract should be:

1. The skills the student wants to develop on placement
2. The tasks they will undertake to acquire these skills
3. The inclusion of completion dates, if possible
4. The personal and professional learning goals and strategies required to reach these goals
5. The arrangements for both supervision and reading time within the placement hours
6. The respective responsibilities for both field educator and student
7. The requirements of the evaluation process (mid-placement visit, mid-placement report and end-placement report)
8. The protocols to be undertaken if difficulties arise throughout the placement. This protocol should include how to communicate with each other as well as how to communicate with the university. The student needs to know that their liaison tutor or university representative is there for guidance and discussion. Early contact with the university is useful as both you and the student need to feel comfortable enough to sound out questions or concerns you have at the beginning of the placement before they develop further.
9. Any agency protocols and expectations including punctuality, dress code and lunch breaks

Models of supervision

If you have more than one student you have to decide what model of supervision you will use. The majority of students undertaking social work field placements will be receiving one-on-one supervision by a qualified social worker based in the agency. Individual supervision must occur for all students to nurture their personal and professional growth. If possible, have a commitment to supervise each student individually, at least on a fortnightly basis.

However, given the professional and industrial context that field education occurs in, this is not the only model students may be experiencing. There are advantages to group supervision that include the impact of group dynamics and the opportunity to provide peer support around the student's learning. If you have a group of students then a weekly or fortnightly opportunity to discuss issues common to all the students and to hear of any problems that might be brewing can work well. As in any group, there will be issues that arise around how the students will work together so allow time for this to be shared and processed by the students. You should attempt to address any issues as they emerge, encouraging students to take responsibility for finding harmonious ways of working together. The reality is that at times there will be some clash of personalities, one student could be seen to be not pulling their weight with the group project, or a student displays inappropriate behaviour in a group student room. In order to progress with the placement learning of each student, these issues need to be addressed.

Your supervision style

Regular feedback, both positive and negative, is important for a student's development. Be constructive in your feedback and share clear examples with the student to illustrate your points. Always give the student the chance to share how they think they are performing, whether it is the opportunity to share their ideas in a community meeting, conducting a psycho-social assessment, or co-leading a group. This assists you to assess what degree of insight they have into their own work and how comfortable they are discussing the quality of their work, and it shows that you are interested in their self-assessment. Encourage honesty and model this yourself.

One of the popular ways for field educators to teach students is to offer shadowing. This is where you go about your tasks with the student observing as appropriate, with permission from clients and/or senior staff as needed. Shadowing emphasises that you are comfortable enough in your practice to be observed, which is what you will want your student to be as well! Shadowing provides content to discuss in supervision. The student will have questions such as why you intervened in a certain manner, how you knew what to say, or which theories might have been guiding you in your approach.

With shadowing it is recommended that initially the student observes and simply take notes that assist with later discussion. Be clear with the student before meeting the client as to what you except of them. Once you witness growth with their understanding of the agency and the nature of the work, you can encourage the student to gradually participate in the action, whether it is with a client or family, a staff meeting, a community meeting, a project meeting or a team meeting. It can be a very exciting milestone in the student's learning when they feel they have something to offer, because they have been able to participate and you have provided feedback to them after the event.

Ways to make supervision enjoyable and interesting

Many students really look forward to supervision and comment that they learn so much from their supervisors.

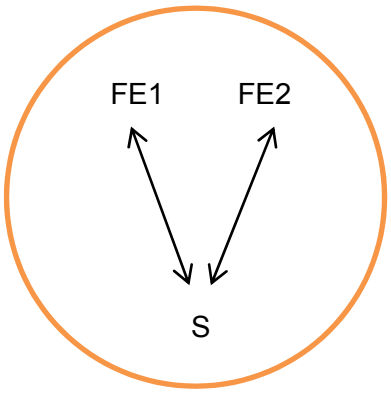
- ✓ Try to make it relaxed but formal enough to impart the message that supervision is an important part of the placement.
- ✓ The student should draft an agenda, but you should bring items that you want to raise as well.
- ✓ Minimise sharing of staff politics and collegial stresses unless it is really necessary for them to know.
- ✓ Find a style of supervision with which you are comfortable.
- ✓ Don’t be afraid to use humour to relieve tension as needed.
- ✓ When appropriate, share mistakes you may have made, to encourage them to share their own mistakes.
- ✓ View the supervision as a growth time for you too, growing as a field educator.
- ✓ Ask your student what they find helpful or less helpful in supervision. You may be surprised! This can assist in future supervision sessions where you can build on this feedback.
- ✓ Remember that your input is really valuable and needs to be handled professionally. Seek peer support from other field educators in the agency or community and try to attend the university workshops offered.

Chapter 6: Student supervision models

As discussed, the most common model for student supervision on a field placement is one field educator to one student. This being said, the current climate of a part-time workforce and increased budgetary pressures has meant that there has been an increase in alternate supervision models. The model that you use will largely depend on the demands of your agency, workload and social work culture. However, all of the models have benefits and constraints so it is useful to consider a range.

Here are some different supervision configurations to consider. In these models student is identified as “S”, field educator is identified as “FE” and student educator (an organisational role) is identified as “SE”.

Configuration 1: One student is supervised by two field educators in the same agency



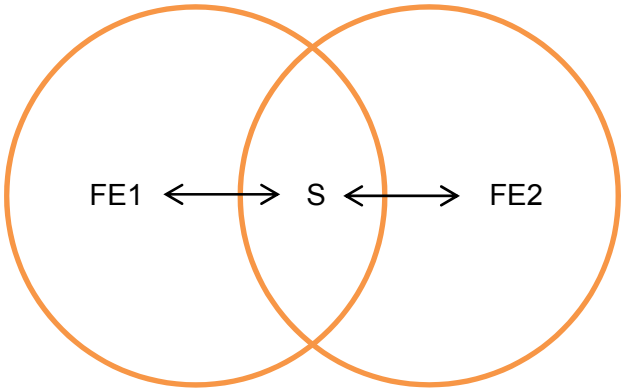
This is a common model where two social workers share a student. This model is useful when:

- The social workers wish to share the role and so one takes on the role of task, or day to day, supervisor and the other provides the social work specific input, such as theory to practice.
- When two social workers job share and they both work part-time. In this scenario the student is supervised by whoever is there on that day.

The benefit to this model is that the student gains from seeing how two practitioners work, can enjoy two different personalities and doesn’t feel that they are a burden in a busy workplace.

In order to maximise the benefits of this model, ensure that before the student arrives you discuss with your colleague the delineation of roles and responsibilities for supervising the student, and how you might deal with any challenges. Occasionally students feel caught between the stresses of two colleagues or are being told different things by the two field educators, which can become very confusing. Important areas of negotiation are content and frequency of supervision, university assessment tasks and the management of issues if they arise.

Configuration 2: One student is supervised by two field educators who are located in different agencies



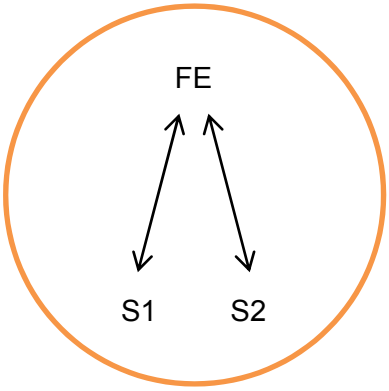
In this model the student is supervised by two different social workers that are doing different jobs and are not located in the same physical location. This can occur when:

- The social workers are part of the same service but physically located in different areas.
- The social workers are part-time but work as inter-agency colleagues so have a synergy to their work.
- There is a flow of clients between the two services and so the student will gain a richer understanding of the client experience. For example, in-patient to out-patient care.
- There is not enough work in one agency but combined with another agency ensures enough student tasks can be offered.

In this model the student will generally split up the placement attendance days in their week to allow them to attend both agencies. For example, Monday-Tuesday at one agency and Wednesday-Friday at the other. Another variation is where the student spends a block of time at each agency, such as six weeks at one agency and six weeks at another.

In order to maximise the benefits of this model the student requires a proper orientation to both agencies to then be able to engage in meaningful work. This may mean that the split between the agencies is structured from the beginning, or it may mean that blocks of time in each agency occur before a split is negotiated. Adjusting to one agency can be enough for any student, let alone trying to orient to two! This model can work if the student is adept at dealing with change and adjusting to an alternating workplace. Communication between the field educators and the student from the beginning of the placement and throughout is essential to monitoring how the student is faring.

Configuration 3: Two students are supervised by one field educator



In this model two students share one field educator and the students are located at the same agency as each other. This can occur when:

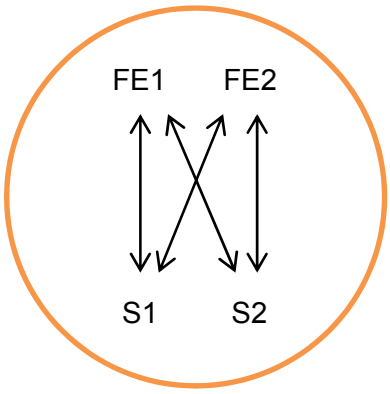
- There are numerous student tasks available in the agency.
- The agency has a supportive culture of student supervision.
- The field educator is in a coordinating role for student placements.

In order to maximise the benefits of this model you really need to plan ahead, develop a work plan for both of the students, and think about the ways you will encourage the two students to maximise the peer support opportunities. It is essential in this model that both students are feeling engaged in the placement with enough tasks to undertake either together or on their own.

Individual supervision will still need to be at the core of your supervisory relationship, however the benefit of this model is that opportunities for peer support can be explored by utilising a joint supervision or group supervision model as well. Joint tasks such as projects or community events can be a great learning experience, providing both students with the opportunity to reflect on how they learn, practice and prepare for working with others in the field.

If the students work well together, this arrangement can prove to be a very enjoyable experience, providing support and allowing them to bounce ideas for practice between each other. However this model does not always work smoothly, especially when there appears to be too much competition between the two students, there are personality clashes, or when one student struggles whilst the other thrives.

Configuration 4: Two field educators share the supervision of two students

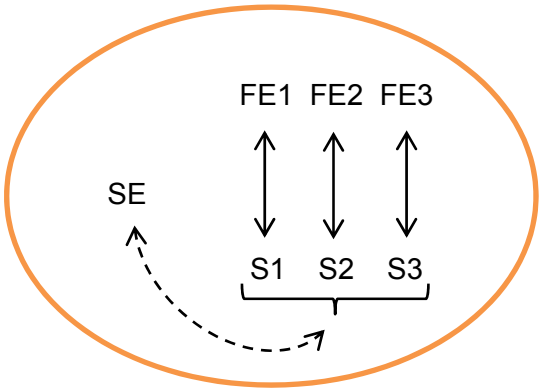


In this model two field educators have a direct relationship with their own student, whilst also having a supervisory relationship with each other's student.

This model is often used when a social worker is not in an agency each day. The benefits include that whilst still having their own supervisor, the students also have a clearly identified "back up" supervisor. This is useful in case of field educators' taking leave, but also ensures that students are receiving supervision from social workers whose experience is most suited to their placement tasks. An example of differing placement tasks may be different clinical areas or distinguishing between different research projects.

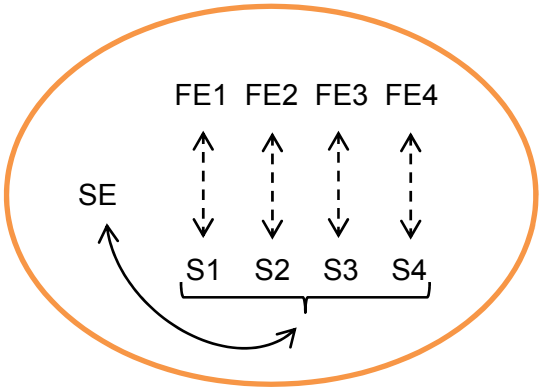
Important to remember that the division of tasks will need to be clarified, the format of supervision and how it will be structured, and how these arrangements can change as the placement progresses.

Configuration 5: Three or more field educators take a student each and a student educator, or student coordinator, oversees the placements



In this model, the student educator, or student coordinator, is employed by the agency and may supervise their own student at the same time as well. This model mainly occurs in large non-government organisations or in large government departments due to the high numbers of student placements. The student educator may run a student professional development program on a fortnightly basis with a theme to complement the individual supervision, such as grief and loss or organisational theory. This can be a really productive arrangement, which takes the full load off newer field educators, promotes peer support in the social work team, provides built-in supervision of the field educator with their student supervision role, and hopefully becomes a supportive mentorship arrangement where the field educator gains from the more experienced student educator. Overall, this model can be very stimulating for the students as they benefit from another social worker's expertise and targeted professional development.

Configuration 6: The student educator co-supervises three or more students, who each also have their own field educator



In this model the students may work together as a student group at time, whilst they also maintain their own student tasks. This model also mainly occurs in large government departments or non-government organisations and involves the students engaging in a joint project together such as planning an open day for the agency, organising a big community event or working on a large research project.

Often the students will have a student space or student room where they can work individually, work on the project or engage in peer support and brainstorming. In this model the student educator can work with the students on developing teamwork skills by establishing clear student group rules at the beginning of the placement. The learning about working within a team can be significant, even if it is not always comfortable as students are forced to reflect on what they bring to the group, how they learn, how they cope with distraction in a learning space and how they utilise the skills and knowledge of co-students and field educators. This model is helpful for beginning field educators who gain supervision from a student educator and benefit from not having to take full responsibility for their own student.

A positive addition to students sharing a space is peer supervision. Even if they think they do not have much in common with their co-student, field educator or other agency staff, this model emphasises the need for students to learn how to work as a team member. You have an important

role in mentoring this team player skill and if you can help your students work well together, the quality of their work is likely to be higher. In addition there will be fewer demands on your time as the student will have a greater capacity to self-manage the less complex issues.

When you are supervising two or more students remember:

- ✓ Students who share a common area will need their own working space at times. This is important for them to break up the dynamic of a student space and feel autonomy in their work. Suggest trying to find another area if they need some quiet time to focus, such as the spare interview room or the local library.
- ✓ Consider that there is always going to be an element of competition or comparison between students. This can also emerge within comments from surrounding agency staff. Work to minimise this as much as you can. Emphasise that field educators are there to help them pass, that they can help each other to pass and that collaboration is the key.
- ✓ Discuss your individual learning styles and how each student is likely to progress at a different rate during the placement because of this factor.
- ✓ If appropriate, involve your students in professional team supervision or team meetings at least once during placement. This opportunity allows students to observe how professionals conduct themselves when communicating in a team environment.
- ✓ Use modelling to show that you, as the field educator often seek help from your own colleagues and that you will also learn from them as students. This will increase the level of comfort that your students have in asking for and receiving feedback from you and your colleagues.
- ✓ Share some relevant stories from your student or professional days, especially if you feel your students have placed you on a pedestal. This can help students to feel that one day they will develop strong expertise, even if they feel they don't know very much at the moment.
- ✓ Use some humour! Placement can be an intense learning environment and even more so for students who are working in close proximity with each other every day. You can model how light hearted comments can improve the working environment and collegiality.

By using a mixture of individual supervision and peer supervision students can develop their own skills as well as learn from each other. Having flexibility within these models can support students when they are struggling with the dynamic between them and their student colleagues.

Liaison tutor reflection

I will never forget visiting Susan who was the quietest student I had ever met. She seemed to have great difficulty in articulating her thoughts, which made the visit a trifle hard. I noticed that she gave extremely brief answers to most questions, forcing me to ask more questions than I would usually do. Susan was in an agency that did direct work so she was forced to see a few clients but much of

the work was observation, due to the sensitive work of child protection. Susan was young, shy, pleasant, well prepared for the visit and passing the placement according to her supervisor. I could see no real issues other than her inability to articulate adequately to me. The co-student was extremely confident and articulate, so that when they jointly presented about the agency funding and policy, it was clear that Susan was the less confident. At the end of the visit, I set Susan a few questions to answer over the next fortnight and this she subsequently did. The supervisor confirmed that although Susan was quiet, she was able to contribute in individual supervision and perhaps just needed time to mature and gain confidence. It became clear later on that Susan felt in the shadow of her co-student.

The following year I was again Susan's liaison tutor. I had to hide my astonishment. Susan was a different young social work student, and placed on her own with an encouraging supervisor, she had blossomed and matured in the 17 months since I had seen her. No longer was she a shy student, only able to offer brief answers. Instead I found a budding young social worker keen to share her reflections. So much of what she had learnt at University and on her first placement had really been absorbed.

Courtesy of liaison tutor correspondence

Group supervision

It is exciting to see that field educators in organisations who may regularly take on social work students are using group supervision more frequently and often quite creatively. Group supervision refers to a group with three or more students meeting at regular intervals and having a skilled facilitator at the helm. The aim is that students will learn from regular presentations by staff and students, a focus on relevant topics for that particular agency and client group, and the guided peer discussion that follows.

Some agencies will use their student educator, or student coordinator, to lead group supervision. Others may have a motivated field educator, perhaps one mentoring new field educators, who decides to establish group supervision by bringing together individual or pairs of students who are linked with various field educators but under the agency umbrella. In this scenario, group supervision has the potential to be really interesting and enjoyable for all concerned.

Advantages to group supervision include:

- The opportunity to share resources, such as new agencies or opportunities for clients
- Broader topics can be taught to all students at once, rather than individually by each field educator
- The opportunity for each student to participate in discussion and / or to present a relevant topic if desired
- The presence of a field educator ensures that discussion is relevant and stays on track

- Students hear from other students in a similar setting sharing their ideas and have the opportunity to debrief about important incidents that occur

Sample group supervision program (can be adjusted for any setting)

Here is a sample group supervision program that can be adjusted to any agency setting. Feel free to use it as a base and personalise it to your specific agency.

Group supervision session	Topics covered
1	a) An introduction to the value of group supervision b) Expectations of students and facilitator c) Call for student ideas for topics and creation of calendar d) Input on overarching agency policies or procedures
2	A case study presented by the field educator with a focus on specific issues for that agency (e.g. involuntary clients, assessment guidelines, or cross-cultural issues). Role plays can also be used to practice skills.
3	Student self-care: Students reflect on the strategies they are currently using or could use throughout their placement. Input by field educator could be presented on vicarious trauma.
4	Theory-practice integration: the field educator and / or students present a range of theories or models that they are using in their placement and students discuss the application of these theories in their practice (examples of theories could be grief and loss, community development principles, systems theory).
5	Multi-disciplinary team work, working with volunteers and professional networking skills.
6	Student presentations of case studies they've been involved with, research projects they've been working on, community events they've organised, or policy documents they've drafted.

Whatever model of supervision you choose, remember it needs to work well for the student, yourself, other field educators and the agency. Flexibility in your approach to supervision models can enhance your creativity as a field educator and allow you to be responsive to your student's needs as and when they occur.

Supervision worksheet: assertiveness task

Courtesy of Maree Higgins, adapted from Cleak & Wilson, 2013, and Cole, 2001

This exercise asks the student to reflect on their level of assertiveness by focusing on a particular incident. This works best when the student picks an incident that did not go as well as planned, rather than using a very successful interaction. Students often want to be more assertive but do not always know how to do this and so will benefit from not only discussion with field educator or colleague after an incident but also seeing how you handle difficult situations effectively.

Part 1	Ask the student to reflect on the questions below and write a reflective response to each one. 1. Know the facts relating to the situation and have the details to hand. 2. Be ready for or anticipate other people's behaviour and prepare your responses. 3. Express your fears, needs or concerns as 'I' statements rather than as someone else's problem. 4. Prepare and use good open questions. 5. Practice your active listening skills, summarising skills and exploration skills so that you can clarify and understand your own reactions to other's behaviour and also understand where they are coming from (posters can help you think and become how you want to be – display positive writings where you will read them often – it's a proven successful technique). 6. Support yourself – be ready with calming, positive self-talk. 7. Prepare other people to support and defend you (choose someone who is really able to help and not just get muddled in the politics – someone who will be objective and communicate positively and assertively).
Part 2	Ask the student to select an incident that needed them to be more assertive in order to be more effective. In discussion with you, ask them to address the following points. Assist the student with assertive language if they are unsure of how to phrase their responses. 1. Ask the student to describe the incident in 3 or so sentences. 2. Ask the student to describe their behaviour (action, words etc.). Were they assertive enough? 3. What would they do differently if they had their time again, anything and why? 4. What do you want them to work on with this skill of assertiveness? Discuss with the student and give concrete examples of how their phrasing or behaviour would change.

Chapter 7: Creativity in social work student supervision

Some of you will have been exposed to creative techniques in your own placements or perhaps whilst on professional training. You may even be using some creative techniques already! Many new field educators like some direction to make their supervision more dynamic or just need some inspiration. Sometimes even experienced field educators state that they need new ideas and welcome suggestions or techniques that might improve the quality of their supervision or help a particular student tackle learning challenges.

So what makes a field educator creative? A creative field educator is responsive to the individual needs of their student, uses humour to connect with their student, is flexible in their delivery, open to new ideas, a positive role model for students, and trusting of the supervision and field education process.

General principles of creative supervision

1. Work within your comfort zone. If your background involves some drama or debating then you are likely to be more comfortable with role play. If as a social worker you regularly use humour well, then this will come naturally when working with your students. If you are artistic then you will find this influences how you prepare tasks and you may find yourself encouraging them to use the camera, video or other mediums to express themselves.
2. Be individual and flexible in your style. Do not just follow the same plan as last time even if it worked well. Think of what your student or students need, respect how they learn and see what they share as important.
3. Exercises or creative tools you use can become a part of your supervision and assessment process.

4. Be clear on why you are using a creative strategy and think through the practical and emotional consequences for the student involved. Creativity sometimes involves an element of risk so expect some resistance.
5. Remember that creativity should increase a student's insight and enjoyment so adjust the task if this is not happening.

How to begin? A reflective exercise for field educators

Creativity can mean different things to different people. Try answering these questions as a beginning point to start to see yourself as a creative field educator.

1. What does the term creative mean to you?
2. What is positive about having some creative input in your supervision or teaching? What does it achieve?
3. Think of a field educator or colleague that you think is or has been creative. What makes them creative and what type of things might they have done or used?
4. Reflect on your supervision with students, staff or volunteers and identify anything you think you have done that is creative. Were there techniques or behaviours that made it creative?
5. How would you like to be more creative in your student supervision?

Tools in creative supervision and their usage

Creative tool	**Strategy and usage**
Drama activities	Drama activities include role plays, skits, or even just a brief re-enactment. Drama games can occur spontaneously within a supervision session when you ask the student to repeat what occurred in an interview with a client, colleague or staff member. This can also be used to prepare for a pending situation. Consider filming the role play, which then allows the student to closely view how they might be seen by others. This can be illuminating for them!
Diagrams or visual models	Diagrams or visual models include genograms or a less structured task where you ask your student to sketch how they view a family system, interaction, or close bonds. Ask them to draw how they view the agency including the organisational and management structure, the staffing components including qualifications and positions and then add key words or themes so they can express how they feel about the agency or perceive it from their position as a student.

Poetry	Relevant poetry can help a student gain a deeper understanding of a social issue, for example disability issues, racism, or rural life. You can also encourage a poetic student to write some poetry, which might express their reaction to something significant at the placement.
Novels and films	Novels and films that are relevant to placement issues are a valuable resource for encouraging empathy in the student. Examples include, 'Tuesdays with Morrie', 'Bucket List', and 'My Left Foot'. There is a great deal of material available so encourage students to find relevant resources, and by reading or watching these materials, try to relate them to their work.
Brief point summaries	Brief point summaries involve a student writing out 5-8 key points of a theory, model or article. They are then asked to provide an example from placement for each point. This is useful for: a) A student who is challenged by theory can be empowered by briefly summarising the key points. b) When you want a student to observe the dynamics and interactions at a seminar or community day. By setting the student this task they are more likely to be active in their observation. c) If you cannot attend an event yourself you can give the student the responsibility to be your 'eyes and ears'. If you are there, this is a good way to measure how observant they are, and ascertain what links they make between content and process, and any conflict they observe.
Multimedia work	Students creating a film about a community group or local issue, or using web-based technologies can be useful, especially if consumers are involved. This media can then be used as promotion for the agency.
Scavenger hunt	A scavenger hunt can be useful in the orientation stage and mixes finding information with fun. It encourages the student to use a map of the agency and specific clues to find key people and critical parts of the agency for example where the library or photocopier is located. It is important to email key staff involved ahead of time so that they can be informed and responsive.
Understanding the client activities	Understanding the client activities are tasks which allow the student to experience the quality of life experience of the client. Some examples include using a wheelchair, visiting Centrelink, trying to orientate themselves to a new area, or achieve a task when all the signs are in a foreign language.

Using the unexpected opportunity	Using the unexpected opportunity is a creative skill that allows you to maximise learning opportunities for your students. It could be taking advantage of a guest speaker at the agency or in the community, or a chance for your student to show a visitor or new student around the agency. For this to work you need to be flexible and be able to adjust your timetable as opportunities arise.
Utilising individual student skills	Students come to placement with a range of skills and if their skills are utilised appropriately this can enhance their learning regarding community cohesion. Skills such as music, art or desktop publishing are always a joy to have a student share. Music and art can be great advantage in both face-to-face and community work placements, with students undertaking a community project such as a brochure, a poster, or even a policy document.
Flash cards	Flash cards such as photo cards, strength cards and emotion cards offer creative learning opportunities. You can use commercially available cards or make your own. Some students find choosing a card that represents how they think or feel about something can trigger further discussion. To maximise the opportunities, the set of cards needs to include pictures that depict a wide range of emotions or strength based statements. These can be used effectively if the student lacks confidence or cannot identify their skills and qualities easily.
Reflection activities 1. Dear Me... 2. Magic Wand 3. Aspiration exercise	1. Writing a letter to oneself (Dear Me) is an example of a reflection exercise that allows the student to visualise themselves leaving placement with their hopes achieved. In this situation the use of visualisation can be powerful, motivating and constructive. The steps are as follows: a. Ask the student to write a letter early in the placement indicating what they would like to have achieved at the completion of the placement. Include skill acquisition, competency, theory, feelings and fears. b. Give the letter back as the student is finishing placement to aid in their reflection on the learning process and their professional development. 2. Magic wand involves asking the student, “if you could wave a magic wand, what specifically would you ask for or like to happen to help you improve your performance at placement”? Enter into discussion with your student as to how this might be realistically achieved. Are there existing links to their learning contract or do you need to add it? This can prove illuminating and can be a great way to pinpoint what your student thinks may help them become more skilled, more knowledgeable, more ethical or just more confident.

3. The aspiration exercise asks the student firstly to describe the qualities of a great social worker, and secondly to name a quality or two that they think they demonstrate even if in a small quantity. Ask them “what are they aspiring to be longer term”? The aim is that you can both add to this list as the placement continues, and the student can begin to see themselves embody their ideal as their experience grows.

Chapter 8: Integrating theory to practice

One of the certainties of being a student supervisor is that some students avoid discussing theory like the plague! And let's be honest, some of us social workers find the actual task of explaining how we integrate theory to our everyday practice not such an easy one. Although theory-practice integration is an essential part of student supervision, it does not need to be exhaustive. A solid grasp of the theoretical framework for your agency context is all that's required. If you read this and think, "I can link theory to practice well and see this as an integral part of the placement", you are indeed fortunate and a gem for the students you teach. For everyone else, focussing on two theories that are relevant to your agency is a good start.

The importance of integrating theory

To be an effective practitioner a social worker must be competent in identifying and evaluating relevant theory for their practice, no matter what the context is. Not only does theory guide our practice, it assists us in justifying what we do with management, colleagues and clients and is vital in the student evaluation process.

We are ethically bound to follow theory in our practice (ASSW Code of Ethics, 2010) and social workers have to be able to justify their decisions, market their services and compete for health and welfare grants. Being able to competently articulate the models they use and the rationale for their choice of intervention are central to both a professional approach to social work and the credibility of the worker.

Placement offers an opportunity to lay a strong foundation for the student and nurtures some of those seeds sown at university. It is very important for students that as supervisors and field educators we can bring theory to life, make it relevant (and perhaps exciting), and as a result lessen the distance that students often feel exists between the classroom and placement. This task

is not always easy, so the following chapter aims to encourage you to try different approaches with your students and includes theories currently being taught at university.

In the placement a highlight for a field educator can be witnessing the breakthrough for a student when suddenly a theory fits their practice. Often the student finds that the theory has come alive and is suddenly relevant. It is rewarding too for the field educator when they are able to explain how they integrate theory into their practice, argue their choice of interventions, approaches or strategies, and present this in ways that can then assist the student to make sense of this process.

Supervisor input

It is good to know a range of theories and sometimes the longer you are in practice the more 'eclectic' you become. This means that you are drawing from a range of theoretical approaches or practice models. This is an understandable approach given the diversity of social work practice.

However we need to be clear why some theories have relevance in some situations but not in others, and also where a combination of theories might be necessary. In some situations students are exposed to a range of theories, whereas in others the agency may adhere to a specific theoretical framework and practice model, for example, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). In this situation the student is likely to get to know one theoretical approach and practice model very well and will hopefully become competent in integrating that particular theory or model by the end of the placement. However, in striving for the greatest amount of learning it is important that students can consider, evaluate, and apply alternative approaches to the same situation.

Where do you start?

When we ask students to identify useful concepts from the last two years they sometimes say the theory is a blur or claim they have not learnt any theories! A major block for some students (and some field educators) is the actual word theory. It can conjure up negative connotations and a feeling of not knowing the answer! Although it is common for students to claim that they haven't learnt much about social work theory at university, this is unjustified and reflects more on their confidence as learners. Perhaps they may not have taken time to reflect on their existing knowledge or just do not see the relevance of such learning to their placement experience, or (perish the thought) they didn't attend that particular lecture! At times a little prodding is needed by the supervisor to retrieve that learning, and assist the student to make the links.

We strongly believe that if you can break the barrier of theory being something complicated, difficult and out of reach you have a good opportunity for learning. Start with asking yourself and your student to develop a phrase or definition for theory. This makes the word more accessible and opens a dialogue between you and your student.

Understanding where theories come from and how they relate to each other

Students often look blank when we ask if they know the roots of a particular theory. Is it from sociology, politics, economics or psychology? If they can identify the discipline they can recognise other theories from that discipline which might help to identify some common terms or concepts. An example is systems theory. Systems theory is a science based theory developed when scientists recognised the impact of subsystems on each other with changes in heat or altitude. When students are asked to guess the roots of this theory it illustrates the problem students experience identifying different theories, and highlights the contextual importance of theory application.

Sometimes a theory is definitely social work based and full of familiar jargon, as in the case of practice models for social workers. With social work students being located in a wide range of settings, the theories that will be relevant to their practice today may encompass issues and concepts that were not part of our own undergraduate training (depending on when or where you were at university). In these circumstances the learning about theory can be both for students and supervisors!

You will notice that certain theories enjoy popularity for a time. Recently **strength-based work**, **trauma** and **crisis intervention** have been favoured highly by students in face-to-face placement settings. It is possible that short-term casework models from the past may be reappearing but with the distinct focus of a particular author and some appreciation of the current welfare and economic climate. For students in community settings, current relevant theories include **community capacity building models**, **anti-oppressive practice** and a **human rights approach**.

No matter how long you have been in practice you will have absorbed an array of theoretical concepts. How do you access this quickly to answer your student's questions? How do you justify your intervention or approach? As a role model and mentor to your student, reflect on your knowledge base and strengths in your practice, as well as the social work values and principles that guide your work. This will assist you to guide your student into a discussion of relevant theory.

Grouping theories into similar categories can prove very helpful. Students and field educators find that recognising the core focus of a theory or model can give clarity to the theory and model's purpose and application. For example, is it a humanist theory such as existential theory, or a learning behaviourist theory? Conflict theory can be discussed as a basis for more radical theories since students are familiar with the concepts of empowerment, consciousness raising and power differentials. Major strands of theory addressed in social work courses include psychological and sociological theories as well as the practice models and frameworks devised from them.

Following is a list of possible categories of theories that you may find helpful although it is only a guide and is certainly not exhaustive. You may find it helpful to categorise the theories, models and frameworks into the psychological, sociological and biological or try to add other theories, frameworks and models to the list below.

Biological theories	Existentialism	Group work theories
Psychodynamic theories	Life span theory	Feminism
Behaviourist theories	Systems theory	Postmodernism
Learning theories	Organisational theories	Family therapy principles
Cognitive theories	Structuralism	Solution focused brief therapy
Humanist theories	Interactionist theory	Critical theory and critical social work
Narrative therapy	Trauma theories	Strengths-based approaches
Assessment frameworks	Crisis intervention	Research methodologies
Adult education principles	Grief and loss frameworks	Human rights perspectives
Anti-racist and anti-oppressive theory	Community development principles	Capacity building

Doing this brainstorming activity with your student can be an empowering exercise where you both are able to bounce ideas off each other, provide positive feedback to one another and feel excited by how much you both do know!

Student reflection

My supervisor and colleagues were proactive in discussing theoretical frameworks related to projects I was involved in, as well as sharing resources as to how I might approach similar issues within a direct placement context. The support from co-workers and autonomy given for project completion offered me an inspiring glimpse into how I would perform as a fully qualified professional.

Courtesy of student correspondence

Chapter 9: The Integration Model - a model for theory to practice

The Integration Model, courtesy of Louise Studdy

As discussed in the previous chapter, some practitioners have a good theoretical basis to their work but have difficulty or lack confidence in articulating this to a student or another worker. Many workers have identified that they were never taught how to link university material to placement and so lack confidence in this area. Other social workers who were exposed as a student to a supervisor with a strong theoretical focus, found this to be a breakthrough experience for them.

The Integration Model is a tool for students, social workers and other field educators to assist them in the integration of theory to practice. This model assists students to link classroom theory to placement experience and can be used in a one-on-one supervision session, in student groups, or in a classroom setting. The model can be used individually by the student or field educator or worked through together, following the steps outlined below. Remember that learning occurs when a positive learning environment is modelled and supported.

Familiarising yourself with the theory

Ask your student to choose a theory by trying to select one that has some relevance to the context of your practice. If it appears in an article or book chapter ask them to read the synopsis or abstract first. Suggest they try to locate a summary of key points, which may appear in a table or grid in the body of the writing or in the conclusion / summary at the end of the article or chapter. Ask them to identify if they recognise any of the terms or jargon or if any are unfamiliar. They may not have the time to read an entire book so encourage them to pick key sections or scan the chapter headings.

Ask them to find familiar terms in the book or article. Students will recognise some of the terms from their classroom courses, for example, conflict theories, power and inequality. They may also recognise feminist terminology when reading critical practice theory. This allows students to understand that they bring some existing knowledge from other subjects to this new theory and so it will be less overwhelming. Recent theories may not appear very familiar to you but may be reminiscent of older theoretical understandings. For example, in the 1970s short-term casework became a popular practice model. Today solution focused brief therapy is a very popular approach with students and practitioners alike, and involves some of the tenets seen in earlier theories despite the new jargon.

Summary stage

Students should summarise the theory in 5-10 brief points. This is not easy, as it requires them to highlight the main points only. With each point they should give an example from practice to explain what they think the theory is about. If any point is unclear, they should return to the text and try to find case studies or examples provided by the author.

Some texts have case studies at the end of the book or chapters, which are easy to follow. Relating social work theories to your practice is much simpler than the challenge of relating theories from other disciplines. Practice theories tell us how to practice as a social worker whereas conceptual theories help us to understand and analyse particular situations and systems. They may be located in areas including human functioning, stages of life span development, organisational theory and the very current approaches of postmodern theory. We need both types of theories in our work.

Two examples of the Integration Model are presented below to demonstrate the application of this model.

Chosen theory	**Key points**
Postmodernism	1. Emphasises difference and diversity 2. Draws attention to language and discourse 3. Shows the need to totally rethink the nature and role of power
Critical social work	1. Looking at the language which is used 2. Asking who is setting the agenda in any interaction 3. Analysing the content of any judgements 4. Questioning the ideology and power base

Linking the theory with your practice

Students should select a case, group or community study from their work. It is important to use only a part of this, for example a 10-minute segment of an interview or group etc. If they are still

working on understanding the theory, it is easy to become overwhelmed with unfamiliar jargon, so encourage them to keep it simple at this stage.

It can be a real challenge at times to make links. Students and field educators can be daunted and want to give up. With each of the summarised points try to find something relevant from the selected practice example. If they are using a theory, for example the stages of group development, they could consider the current stage of their group and whether it is exhibiting the group behaviour that they might expect from a group at the 'norming' stage.

They should then consider whether the group behaviour fits the theory. For example, in terms of the middle stage of casework is there a demand for work, movement or change taking place?

You must find some links to bring the theory to life. If the theory is challenging it may take a couple of weeks for you and the student to make the links, but do try to persevere, as it will be worth it.

Chosen theory	**Application to social work practice**
Postmodernism	1. Expert knowledge is not the only knowledge that should be considered. 2. Perceived membership of one social category does not automatically point the way forward for intervention. 3. Power is not always held by only one party in any relationship and it is not only social institutions or their representatives that have power.
Critical social work	1. Using different perspectives to examine a situation in detail, in order to open up possibilities. 2. Considering the theoretical and value positions in which this 'examination of evidence' is based. 3. Bringing these considerations together into an overview, so the full implications are revealed. 4. Presenting this in 'ways that may assist, guide or influence' an audience.

Evaluating the selected theory

The next stage is to evaluate the selected theory. It is important in this stage to be critical and raise both positive and negative aspects in their evaluation of the chosen theory. Ask your student to consider:

1. What is the value in using this theory or model with this case, group or community?
2. What are the strengths of the theory or model?
3. What are the gaps in the theory or model both generally and in particular with your selected case / group / community situation?

If the theory seems to have little relevance to their selected practice example, they should not despair. It is important to acknowledge the ways in which the theory helps understanding. Also, articulating and analysing where there is little 'fit' between the two, may point the way to other theories or models or suggest new directions for a theoretical development, which draw on your practice experience.

Critical analysis of theory is expected by your social work students, so encourage this, as it is not always forthcoming. Once a student is feeling more confident about a theory it is often useful to combine the strengths of two frameworks, where one may be more conceptual and the other one more practice orientated and informing of the intervention. For example when working with a teenager who is a refugee, the student might use parts of life stage theory (what challenges might they be facing as a teenager?), or grief and loss theory to inform their understanding of their past refugee experiences and current status.

Schema to help students link a theoretical model to their practice

A great way to encourage students to engage with a new theory or model is to provide some key questions for them to answer about it. This way they are not just reading the article or book from start to finish, they are reading with a purpose and seeking answers as they go. Suggest they make brief notes and highlight their findings.

Below is an example of a set of questions designed to help students gain the most from the book *Coping with Grief* (McCissock & McCissock, 2012).

1. How do the authors describe or define grief and bereavement? Include any key phrases or words.
2. How might someone experiencing significant grief react physically (bodily reaction) and emotionally? Give several examples for both.
3. What does the author say about the grief process?
4. Give examples of significant loss both from the book and from your life experience and / or placement.
5. What support might be useful for a bereaved person?
6. What might be helpful to know in understanding children who are experiencing grief?
7. Comment on McCissock's discussion of gender differences with grief. Do you agree or have you seen this with people you know or clients you have observed or worked with to date?
8. Now review a summary of Kubler-Ross's (1969) stages of grief. How does it vary from McCissock's (2012) model?
9. What do you like about these 2 grief models? Why? Do you see any limitations?
10. Now using an example from placement, make some links with McCissock's theory.

11. Encourage your students to think of grief at both the micro and macro levels, for example the community grief experienced after the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004), in the aftermath of the Victorian bush fires (2009) and the ongoing impact of war on asylum seekers and refugees having to flee their homelands.

When using the Integration Model remember:

- ✓ No one theory fits all situations and all theories have some shortcomings so students should see this as part of being critically analytical.
- ✓ Students should know at least two or three theories competently by the end of the placement and be able to discuss the main tenets of the theory with confidence and link to examples from their practice. You can set them a task to summarise and discuss with them in supervision as a first step.
- ✓ You are not expected as a supervisor or field educator to know all theories but it is important as a role model that you can competently explain several theories that relate to your daily work whether you are a grass roots worker or a manager.
- ✓ Showing interest in the University learning of your student breaks down the distance between agency and university so that you will both benefit!
- ✓ Ask the student to work through the integration model above before the mid-placement visit as it will boost their confidence, both when integrating theory to their placement and assisting them in the oral discussion of theory at the visit. Set a time limit on your student completing the summary and providing examples.

It is so easy for the theory aspect of supervision to slip. Urgent matters tend to take priority, “let’s do it next week” can prevail and the result is often that student and supervisor do not have enough focus on the theory. Be positive about theory! Seek out articles or textbooks that are written in plain English and use your university as a resource to assist with this.

Strategies for theory-practice integration to use in supervision

1. Do not take ‘no’ for an answer. Students may create excuses to avoid focusing on theory. Expect excuses and be armed with firm responses, acknowledging that some students may find theory hard initially or not as exciting as direct practice. You could respond with “I know it may be daunting or possibly boring but if we leave it, it will only become more daunting and difficult, and you will lose confidence in your practice the longer we delay it.” Also add that to meet the requirements of placement, students have to demonstrate a level of competence in all areas, including applying theory to practice.

2. Ask your student to write down three theories that might be relevant to your agency with three key words from each, for the next supervision session and do this in the first month no matter how busy you are.
3. Provide an article or book chapter that you find useful to your work and provide it to the student as a resource. The student should identify 3-5 relevant points for their next supervision and if the article is not relevant then the student should explain why this is the case. Do not expect the student to see your agency as you do, especially the organisational aspects.
4. Focus on a key activity or area of your agency, for example use of teamwork or group work. Ask the student to attend a staff or community meeting or attend a group with you as part of their allocated placement tasks and provide some clear questions to be answered after the exercise. Questions might include:
    a. Has any overt conflict been observed and was it resolved?
    b. Was any covert conflict observed?
    c. Were there formal and informal leaders?
    d. What was the mood of the group and did it change and why?
    e. How could it have been run more effectively?
5. When possible, request a written analysis to facilitate learning. Positively affirm their accurate observations and linking with theoretical material even if it is at a simple level. For many students there is a hesitancy to embark on more complex theory to practice connections.
6. Documenting your discussion on theory can only enhance the learning process. Keep theory summaries handy and perhaps a list of social work skill terms from the texts, so that students can conceptualise the activities in which they are involved in social work terms. The students need to demonstrate a professional presentation through their written communication, so using social work terms can assist in this process. Ask what theory might help them analyse the situation – what part of the theory and why? Take some time to add your written comments on their submissions before discussing it in supervision. Having written work can assist the student to reflect on their growth as a developing social worker, but it is also helpful for both of you being able to view the theories that have been referenced so far.
7. Try to keep your theory resources together in a file so you can build on it. If you are regularly supervising students, photocopy key sections and keep the original saved electronically so that valuable work is not lost.
8. If you have a very academically inclined student you might feel they know more theory than you are comfortable with, so ask them to share their perceptions of a particular theory and you should ask questions in any areas you do not follow. We certainly learn much from our students but we must feel able to ask them to elaborate or re-word if the meaning is not clear. Remember that there is an important role for your practice theories alongside the student's theories.

9. Finally, take theory in small bites throughout the placement so that it can be absorbed and applied, and not lost.

Remember that a practicing social worker professional should be able to explain **what** they are doing and **why**. So get your students working and ensure that you are able to see the theoretical integration in their work!

Student reflection

While there were many good things about my experience, having the opportunity to create social change at a systemic level was most inspiring and without a doubt the thing I will remember most fondly.

Courtesy of student correspondence

Reflective learning worksheet: think sheets

Adapted from Cleak & Wilson, 2013, Making the Most out of Field Placement, Third Edition, P. 88

The think sheet is a learning tool which aids student reflection and can be applied to any placement tasks including case work or counselling sessions, community work activities and research or policy tasks. A real advantage of this reflective tool is that it helps the student to break down what has occurred into distinct items and helps them with their own learning. It provides structure to reflective writing, making it distinctive from journal writing.

As well as asking the student to comment on the emotive side of the client, themselves and others, it encourages a focus on what they learnt and how this was done. When an intervention has not gone as well as planned it is important for the student to reflect on what they have learnt, how they might do it differently (wisdom in hindsight!) but to also recognise what they did do adequately or well, as there is always something positive.

Some learning blocks may be easier for you the supervisor to tease out, for example a student uncomfortable with a client's expression of pain or grief may tend to move onto safer topics or become more action focussed. They may not realise this is happening regularly and need you, the supervisor, to point out this pattern. However students may offer plenty of ideas as to why they had difficulties and have good insight already into their own learning blocks.

When using the think sheet remember:

1. You can change ‘practical assistance’ to ‘tasks undertaken’ so this tool is relevant to community work, research tasks, social policy or student projects.
2. Remember to go through your expectations of using this tool and check that the student understands why they are doing this, clarify any terminology, spell out when it must be completed and emphasise that they will gain something by undertaking this exercise if they are honest and spend an appropriate amount of time completing it.

Think sheet worksheet

Identifying data	Who were you with? Where were you? What were the significant issues or events that occurred?
Practical assistance or tasks undertaken Remember to distinguish between concrete and other kinds of tasks	
Feeling component In both yourself and others involved, identify the feelings and the levels of emotion present	Student: Level of emotion: Client / service user: Level of emotion:
What content have I learnt?	
How have I learnt? Remember to focus on the process of learning and strengthening the learning	
Learning blocks Ensure you identify any issues that have an impact on learning in this situation	

Chapter 10: Writing skills on placement

Students begin their first placement with variable skill levels in a number of areas, writing skills being one of these. The range of written reports and formats for professional practice is extremely varied and includes memos, emails to agency staff, assessment reports, funding submissions, research reports, group evaluation reports, community profiles, etc. The list goes on! You as the field educator are the expert with the written documentation that your agency uses every day. Universities therefore, value the written skills that you can teach our students in the field educator role. It is crucial that you teach your students how to competently utilise the written word for the benefit of your clients and agency.

In many placements there will be opportunities for students to practice and develop their written skills including undertaking psychosocial assessments, family assessments, writing up case notes or making referrals to other agencies. It is expected that initially students will be slow to complete such reports and perhaps struggle with the correct language to use. With practice and feedback from yourself (feel free to comment on anything they need to learn), students on their first placement should be improving significantly by mid-placement. The process of writing and re-writing drafts can, in itself, be a valuable learning opportunity as it is building the students writing capacity.

When working with students on their writing skills remember:

- ✓ If the student is concerned about producing ‘perfect work’ then provide them with a deadline that they must meet with their draft. Having a deadline can force editorial decisions.
- ✓ With the student for whom English is not their first language, or for whom literacy is a concern, the pace may be slightly slower and you may have to correct more writing

fundamentals, such as grammar. In this case an early discussion with the university representative is appropriate to see what support the university can provide.

- ✓ If possible, have a 'mock report' on hand for student purposes or a real one with identifying data removed. This way the student will be able to have some understanding of what you are expecting from them. Remember you may have done hundreds of these reports but it may seem quite foreign to your student, so be realistic with your expectations.
- ✓ If you have two students with a collegial dynamic, encourage them to communicate with each other to develop their written pieces and to share resources.
- ✓ Learning can take time and for some students writing skills are a particular challenge. Patience and creative teaching can encourage a student's learning in this area.
- ✓ Try not to compare your students with past students who had very competent written skills. Remember that all students sit on a spectrum of learning and no two students will ever be alike in their skill levels.

Strategies for working with and developing your students writing skills

1. Give the student a few sample reports to look at early in the placement so they can see the type of language used by your agency.
2. Get your student to write a few short pieces in the early weeks so you can assess their writing competence. If a gap is identified work proactively and positively with the student regarding their skill level.
3. Once you've identified the level of their writing skills provide the student with clear feedback on this. This is important so that the student has tangible feedback to build on, but also to sustain student morale.
4. Be clear about the expected outcomes of written tasks at the beginning of the placement and include it in the learning contract. For example, is the written piece going to be part of a research paper, is it a 5,000 word document or will they need to write several small papers over the duration of the placement? What should their case notes or client reports read like at the end of the placement?

No matter what type of written work your student is undertaking, remind them to keep the following questions in mind:

- ✓ What is the purpose?
- ✓ Should they use a special structure or format?
- ✓ What is the preferred language (formal versus informal)?
- ✓ Are there exemplars or templates available?

- ✓ What are the sensitivities, policies or protocols regarding their work?
- ✓ Under whose name does the report go out?

It is hoped that your student will develop an awareness of the importance of professional writing early on in their placement. You and your team members will be key mentors in this process so please take the time to explain what is needed in the placement and remember to check out whether the student really does understand what is required in this area.

Student reflection

My first major project was for myself to co-write with another intern to research 9 major issues that are impacting on young people in NSW and to create [the agencies'] Election Agenda which they would build a campaign around for the next NSW state election. This would then be put on their website and shown to other peak bodies around NSW highlighting the current issue and what the NSW Government can change to create an early intervention approach. I gained an insight into areas such as housing, support in schools, domestic violence and mental health and how these issues are impacting upon young people. Hearing that my supervisor had shown members of NSW State Government what I had written for [the agencies'] Election Agenda was both humbling and empowering, I felt in some small way I was making a difference.

Courtesy of student correspondence

Written skills worksheet

Courtesy of Louise Studdy

Use the following worksheet when assisting students in their learning about different types of documentation. Provide your student with an example of written material that they can use as a guide. Some examples include: actual case file reports with identifying data removed, court reports, newspaper articles, newsletters or office emails. Have the students answer the following questions then discuss their answers in supervision.

What is the purpose of this written item?	
Who is going to be the reader (both intentionally and perhaps unintentionally)? Will it be the client, NGO, colleague or community member?	
What type of language should be used to maximise the impact or outcome? Does it require the use of specialised terms; is it formal or informal in style?	
Is it written in the first person or other?	
Is a letterhead or logo included and why?	
What agency protocols are being followed in the construction of the document?	
Has a format, structure or special form been used?	
To what rules or issues of confidentiality are you required to adhere? How much information can you disclose?	
Has permission been gained from the client, family, group referred to in the document? Was it needed? How do you know this?	
Who needs to approve the draft document?	
Whose name does it go out under if it is not your own? Why?	
List the type of written documents that you have completed to date on placement. Use the correct terminology for each.	
What other points need to be considered when writing documents as a social worker?	

Chapter 11: Student resilience - challenges that can occur on placement

Challenges can sometimes be a part of taking on a student for placement and sometimes this can mean the placement does not go as planned. Challenges could stem from a variety of sources, such as the student themselves, from yourself in the field educator role, or from your agency and its organisational context. Challenges do not always have to be negative and do not always mean problems for the placement. On the whole, students can be resilient and challenges can often mean an opportunity for creativity as a field educator. Often when a student presents with extra challenges they can have high expectations of themselves, and in turn the field educator can begin to view them as a competent worker, rather than a student. Keep in mind that despite the age, experience, or confidence that the student displays, their primary role in the agency is that of a learner.

Student challenges

Students with extra challenges are a diverse group and the way you communicate and support with each student will be individual and unique. Some of the common challenges that students experience include:

1. **Students with extra responsibilities**: The majority of social work students have to work part-time whilst undertaking a full-time placement. In addition some have caring or child care responsibilities. Others have their own physical health issues they are dealing with. These students will often require flexibility with times and dates for their placement, and that sometimes flows on to flexibility with the management of placement tasks. If the field educator is supportive of their individual needs, students often find that they feel so positive about their placement experience that they can navigate their dual responsibilities.

2. **Trauma or mental health background**: An increasing amount of students have a traumatic response to incidents they are involved with on the placement, or disclose a trauma or mental health background to their supervisor. Often students are reluctant to disclose these issues to the university, as they have a fear of stigma, not being given the placement they want, or being viewed negatively by university or agency staff. The university is always mindful not to breach the student's privacy however if there is a risk to the student's wellbeing, learning on placement or to the agency's client group then the field educator should contact the university representative as early as possible in the placement.
3. **Mobility and access issues** may be significant key factors for some students and the university works with these students to identify as closely as possible any adjustments that may need to be made in the course of their placement. Adjustments can include physical aids such as rails or adjustable chairs, but could also include computer programs, voice recognition programs, visual aids or variations to the placement attendance pattern.
4. **Literacy issues**: This includes students who present on placement with poor spelling, grammar and hand writing despite having progressed satisfactorily at a tertiary level. Often the root cause can be found in educational backgrounds and a decreasing reliance on hand writing in everyday life. This issue should be identified early in the placement as universities have learning and teaching supports available for students in this area. In addition these students may require extra time to complete drafts of written work prior to submission to their field educator.
5. **International students** have particular needs on placement including adjusting to the cultural context of the Australian workplace. Even if their spoken English is strong, do not assume that the student is comfortable with the cultural context. This is particularly true for students from countries where English is a common language, yet the welfare system is significantly different to Australia. These students require a more detailed orientation in regards to international differences and may need ongoing debriefing regarding moments of cultural clash that they may encounter.
6. **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students** potentially face heightened challenges related to balancing field placement with their family and community commitments. They may also experience racism or isolation within an organisation. Paying attention to cultural safety in the workplace, encouraging critical thinking and questioning, giving students access to cultural mentors, encouraging the development of supportive networks among students and working collaboratively with the university when issues arise is crucial to the success of the placement experience.

External supervisor reflection

James was late and arrived sleepy to his first external supervision session. Two weeks later he did not turn up at all, prompting me to ring him. An apology came a day later indicating that once again he had slept in. When we met, we talked about professionalism and I learnt that this overseas student worked every night of the week. How on earth was he going to stay awake at his

placement, let alone in an external supervision session? It would have been easy to give up on him but something told me to give him more time. I spelt out to him what would happen if he missed any more supervision and decided to ring his supervisor. Surprisingly James was doing quite well at his agency but quite often did present as tired. James quickly found alternative work that allowed more sleep and was appreciative of the chance to prove himself.

He passed this first placement and went onto his final placement the following year. As his English improved, his confidence grew and his belief that he had something to offer the profession was really visible. In his final placement he was recognised as having strong empathic skills, a warmth that clients appreciated and a strong ability to organise himself. It was pleasing to hear a colleague remark that he was doing well at placement and hoped to use his native language when he graduated. James needed the extra follow up in his first placement. However with some restructuring of his personal life he was able to complete both placements, graduate and find employment.

Courtesy of external supervisor correspondence

Field educator challenges

Sometimes it is the field educator that is having the challenge. Some examples include:

1. The field educator has been absent due to ongoing illness and there has been little back-up supervision in the agency. In this situation the student can lack direction with their learning and may find it hard to fulfil the necessary learning tasks.
2. The field educator has been transferred to fill another position outside of their agency. In this situation it is important that adequate supervisory arrangements are made but if this is not possible, communicate with the university about options as early as possible.
3. Agency or staff arrangements can change from when the placement was initially organised, leaving a planned student without the field educator who initially requested the student. It can be hard for a student if they are 'inherited' from another field educator, especially if there is ill feeling or disappointment.
4. An agency has made a decision that all staff must take on student placements. If you did not choose to have a student originally but you have been told that you need to assist with supervision either as sole or co-supervisor, then this will impact on the experience for you both. Positivity is key to the success of the field placement experience.

When a student or field educator challenge emerges remember:

- ✓ Always ask the student to share what they see as challenging rather than making assumptions. Even if you have had students with what appear to be similar challenges before, try to minimise generalising or developing a student stereotype.

- ✓ Explore with the student their personal strengths and qualities in order to balance their view of this challenging experience. Ask the student how they have dealt with this challenge in the past. You'll want to know what their strengths and strategies are and what do you need to know to assist them.
- ✓ Explore whether there are university resources with which the student can be linked to facilitate a productive placement experience. Contact your university representative who has been allocated to visit this placement and share your concerns. Find out if they know the student. Can they assist with any relevant information that they are able to share while still maintaining the student's confidentiality?
- ✓ Carefully check the university guidelines regarding learning goals and tasks so that you can be confident that your expectations are realistic, especially if the student is on their first placement.
- ✓ Emphasise that although you are aware of the challenge they are experiencing, they need to clearly communicate with you how they are doing on the placement and not assume that you will know this.
- ✓ Try to maintain the boundaries of your role as field educator, even if they ask for some counselling help. You are not their counsellor but if counselling is required they should be encouraged to seek assistance through the university or via their local doctor.
- ✓ Consult with your colleagues and other experienced field educators to see if there are additional strategies that collective wisdom would recommend.
- ✓ Remember that it can take time for a student to settle into a placement, particularly if it is their first placement. Part of their learning experience is to adjust to the workplace and to negotiate how their extra challenge can become a positive contribution for them.
- ✓ Always remember to document your supervision discussions, including dates.

Self-care worksheet for social work students

Courtesy of Louise Studdy

Students need to be learning self-care strategies in practice as a technique to support them throughout their career as a social worker. Use this worksheet at any stage through the placement to guide a discussion with your student regarding their self-care needs. This is particularly useful for students who are having a personal response to the content of their placement tasks, or who are neglecting their own need for breaks during working hours.

Why is self-care so important for social workers and their students?

What self-care strategies have you used so far whilst on placement? Be specific.

What success have you had with these techniques?

Name other self-care strategies that you have observed or heard about from your field educator / other social workers / students?

What are some symptoms showing that a social worker or other health professional might be starting to burn out?

How do you know when you are getting run down or overwhelmed in a work situation?

What might you need to do more on this placement to maintain your enthusiasm and energy levels for the duration of the placement?

Chapter 12: The end is in sight - finishing placement

Planning well ahead for finishing placement is essential. As a field educator you need to model to your student how to finalise the tasks, end relationships and complete the placement in a professional manner. Completion is a skill that the students will take with them throughout their careers and is relevant for all areas of social work.

The completion process is informed by end stage theories, such as final stage of casework and group work, grief and loss theories. Students are often surprised by the emotions they experience as they approach the end of their placement. Students can experience a range of both gratifying and challenging feelings including:

1. A sense of achievement or fulfilment when reviewing their accomplishments.
2. Feelings of relief or surprise at the end of such a lengthy period of time.
3. Frustration and disappointment when tasks are not completed in the way they had imagined.
4. Sometimes there is real sadness to be leaving the clients or group members whom they may have come to know well.
5. At times students experience feelings of guilt at leaving their clients or colleagues.
6. Often students feel exhaustion prior to the final few days at placement. In some situations this brings about disengagement from the work earlier than needed, so the student finds it hard to keep motivated to the end.

The aim is to help your student handle completion of their placement in the same professional manner that they conducted themselves throughout the other placement stages. Some helpful strategies include:

- ✓ The second half of placement often moves quickly so after the mid-placement visit, both you and the student write in your diary, ‘placement finishes in a month’, ‘only 2 weeks to go’ and ’one week to go’. This minimises disappointment, rushing and a lack of necessary reflection time at the very end.
- ✓ One month before the end of placement, meet with the student and ask them to determine their priorities for learning and outstanding tasks. Specify what needs to be done before the end of placement. For example, write a final draft court report, take meeting minutes independently or undertake a solo complex assessment.
- ✓ Aim for them to complete the majority of tasks one week before the last day, as finishing tasks always takes longer than expected.
- ✓ Share some of your own completion stories that might encourage the student to elaborate on what they feel they have achieved. Warn them that grief and loss will impact on them in some way when ending their placement so they should not to be too surprised if they have unexpected feelings.
- ✓ Let your student know that endings and grief are difficult and that this is a good time to gain some more insight and skills into how to handle professional completion.
- ✓ Two weeks before their last day ask the student in supervision if they feel able to share with you an excerpt from their journal. It should be something which they are comfortable to reveal to you and engage in a discussion about. By doing this activity you are beginning their reflection on completing placement.
- ✓ Encourage your student to reflect in their journal with these suggested questions:
    a) How do I normally handle goodbyes or endings?
    b) What do I think will be hard about leaving the placement?
    c) What am I looking forward to after placement is finished?
    d) How could I continue to build on my skills in this area?
- ✓ Stress to the student that any unresolved issues from placement may impact them either in their next placement or in the workplace, so engaging in meaningful reflection prior to finishing placement will have a positive impact.

Concluding rituals

Concluding rituals are an important part of marking the passage of time and acknowledging the contributions of individuals in a communal environment. Students have often invested a large amount of time, energy and passion into the agency and an acknowledgement of this is well deserved. A farewell morning tea or lunch is often appreciated, with students also reciprocating in their gratitude. Such rituals really aid the completion process and can provide a light social end to the placement. Even when difficulties have been experienced during the placement, a positive end can leave both students and field educators feeling that their time and energy has been valued and they have been a part of something important.

Concluding worksheet: your journey as a social work student at placement

Courtesy of Louise Studdy

This is a reflective worksheet to use around a month before the placement ends. The aim of this worksheet is to encourage your student to focus on some key areas that need to be discussed in your concluding supervision sessions, and in the end-placement report. Students can sometimes get lost in the tasks or the detail and it's helpful for them to stand back and reflect on their progress. Particularly this worksheet aims to focus the student's reflection on their skill development, theory development, and professional confidence. Once the student has individually answered the questions, have them bring it in to supervision and use it as a discussion guide.

1. What skills need further development? Name the specific skills and indicate how you will achieve this.

2. How can you use more theory at placement? Be specific with both the names of theories and how you might achieve this.

3. Are there any areas where you feel you need to improve your professional confidence? If so how might you achieve this?

4. In terms of your progress as a student social worker where do you want to be at the end of this placement?

5. How do you see this placement fitting with the rest of your career goals?

6. What areas are still areas of development for you and how do you see these progressing from here?

Bibliography

Adams, R., Dominelli, L. and Payne, M. (2002) Critical Practice in Social Work, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Allan, J., Pease, B. and Briskman, L. (eds.) (2003) Critical Social Work, Allen and Unwin, Sydney.

Alston, M. and Bowles, W. (2012) Research for Social Workers: An Introduction to Methods, Allen and Unwin, Sydney.

Angell, G.B. (2002) Neuro-linguistic programming, in Social Workers' Desk Reference (SWDR), A.R. Roberts and G.J. Greene (eds.), 421-428, Oxford University Press, New York.

AASW, (2013), Australian Association of Social Workers (2013): Practice Standards, Canberra.

AASW, (2008), Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (ASWEAS), Canberra.

AASW, (2010), Code of Ethics, Canberra.

Baldry, E. and Green, S.M. (2012) Our Voices: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Work, Palgrave MacMillan, Melbourne.

Baum, N. (2011) Social Work Students' Feelings and Concerns about the Ending of their Fieldwork Supervision, Social Work Education, 30(1): 83-97.

Cleak, H. and Wilson, J. (2013) Making the Most of Field Placement, Third Edition, Cengage Learning, Melbourne.

Cooley, B. and Salvaggio, R. (2002) Ditching the Dis in Disability: Supervising Students who have a Disability, Australian Social Work, 55(1): 50-57.

Cooper, L. and Briggs, L. (2000) Fieldwork in the Human Services, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Cole, K. (2001) Supervision: The Theory and Practice of First-Line Management, Second Edition, Prentice Hall, Sydney.

Currer, C. (2007) Loss and Social Work, Sage, London.

Davys, A. and Beddoe, L. (2000) Supervision of students: a map and a model for the decade to come, Social Work Education, 19(5: 437-449.

Dove, C. and Skinner, C. (2010) Early placement breakdown in social work practice placements, Journal of Practice Teaching & Learning, 10(1): 59-74.

Giles, R., Irwin, J., Lynch, D. and Waugh, F. (2010) In the Field: From Learning to Practice, Oxford University Press, Sydney.

Goldsworthy, K.K. (2005) Grief and loss theory in social work practice: All changes involve loss, just as all losses require change, Australian Social Work, 58(2): 167–178.

Hall, R. (2008) Applied Social Research: Planning, Designing and Conducting Real-world Research, Macmillan Education, Melbourne.

Healy, K. (2014) Social Work Theories in Context: Creating Frameworks in Context, Second Edition, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Healy, K. and Mulholand, J. (2012) Writing Skills for Social Workers, Sage, London.

Kadushin, A. and Harkness, D. (2002). Supervision in Social Work, Fourth Edition, Columbia University Press, New York.

Kubler-Ross, E. (1969) On Death and Dying: what the dying have to teach doctors, nurses, clergy and their own families, Scribner, New York.

Lishman, J. (2009) Communication in Social Work, Palgrave, Basingstoke.

McCissock, M. and McCissock, D. (2012) Coping with Grief: the Trusted Classic Guide for the Bereaved and their loved ones, Fourth Edition, ABC Books, Sydney.

O'Hara, A. and Weber, Z. (2005) Skills for Human Service Practice: Working with individuals, groups and communities, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Page, M. (2003) Race, Culture and the supervisory Relationship: A Review of the Literature and a Call to Action, Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 18 (2): 161-174.

Sidell, N. and Smiley, D. (2008) Professional Communication Skills in Social Work, Pearson, Boston.

Trevithick, P. (2012). Social Work Skills and Knowledge: a Practice Handbook, Open University Press, London.

School of Social Sciences
Arts & Social Sciences

UNSW Australia
Morven Brown Building, High Street
Sydney NSW 2052

socialsciences.arts.unsw.edu.au

How to grow a social worker: a comprehensive guide to student supervision
Published 2015