

The University of Hong Kong  
Department of Social Work & Social Administration

Social Work Fieldwork Placement

**GUIDELINES FOR AGENCIES**

1. Introduction
2. Nature and Objectives of Fieldwork
3. Social Work Programmes Offered by HKU
4. General Description of Fieldwork Programme
5. Agency - HKU Collaboration
  - 5.1 Communication/Co-ordination
  - 5.2 Division of Responsibilities at the Operational Level:
    - 5.2.1 Physical Facilities and Administrative Support
    - 5.2.2 Preparation
    - 5.2.3 Orientation
    - 5.2.4 Monitoring Ongoing Work
    - 5.2.5 Evaluation
6. Student's Responsibilities in Fieldwork Placement
  - 6.1 Responsibility to Agency
  - 6.2 Responsibility to Client System
  - 6.3 Responsibility for Learning

**Attachments:**

- I. General Requirements on Student Workload in Fieldwork Placements (A-03)
- II. Fieldwork Placement Student Evaluation Report (A-10a)
- III. Explanatory Notes on Fieldwork Placement Student Evaluation Report (A-10b)
- IV. Fieldwork Placement Student Evaluation Report-Mark Calculation Attachment (A-10c)
- V. Agency Feedback Form on the Student's Performance (A-09)
- VI. Record-Keeping: Guidelines for Students in Field Practice (A-05)

**1. Introduction:**

This is a set of guidelines on student fieldwork practice provided by the Department of Social Work and Social Administration, The University of Hong Kong, for agencies receiving social work students from HKU for fieldwork placements. It attempts to introduce to agencies the specific objectives of fieldwork training of the various social work programmes offered by this Department. It also aims at highlighting the major areas of co-operation and division of responsibilities between the Department and the agencies in providing practice training to social work students.

**2. Nature and Objectives of Fieldwork:**

Fieldwork practice is an integral part of social work education with the emphasis on “learning through doing” In fieldwork, the student, although a “learner” is at the same time dealing directly with life situations and, under the guidance of a fieldwork supervisor, is expected to deliver services commensurate with agency practice.

Fieldwork practice gives students opportunities to integrate theory and practice, particularly in:

- a) demonstrating social work principles and values;
- b) testing out models;
- c) developing practice skills.

It also provides an opportunity for the student to:

- a) enhance self-understanding;
- b) develop a personal style of work, within the bounds of professional practice.

**3. Social Work Programmes Offered by HKU**

The Department offers both undergraduate and postgraduate training programmes in social work, leading to the degrees of BSW and MSW respectively.

**The BSW Programme**

The BSW programme aims to provide a first level professional education for entry into the profession of social work. The curriculum includes the knowledge, values, processes and skills that are essential for the practice of social work. Upon graduation, a student should have attained a generalist training, with a beginning professional level of proficiency and an awareness of his/her responsibility to continue his/her professional development. He/she can also register under the Hong Kong Social Workers Registration Board as a Registered Social Worker in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

The curriculum normally extends over four academic years consisting of eight semesters of full-time study. All the courses being designed are in accordance with the SWRB ‘s Principles, Criteria and Standards for Recognizing Qualifications in Social Work for Registration of Registered Social Worker. Listed below is a sample sequence of required courses:

Year 1	<p>SOWK1002. Introduction to social work  SOWK1008. Social welfare system and social policy  SOWK1009. The reflective practitioner  PSYC1001. Introduction to psychology  SOC11001. Introduction to sociology  or  SOC11003. Introduction to anthropology  CAES1000. Core University English  Three Common Core Courses selecting not more than one course from the same Area of Inquiry  Remaining credits are for free electives</p>
Year 2	<p>SOWK1004. Human behaviour and the social environment (I)  SOWK2008. Human behaviour and the social environment (II)  SOWK2085. Social service research I: methodology  SOWK2107. Foundation of social work practice I  SOWK3108. Foundation of social work practice II  CSSC9001. Practical Chinese for social sciences students  or  CUND9002. Practical Chinese and Hong Kong society (<i>for non-Cantonese speaking students</i>)  or  CUND9003. Cantonese for non-Cantonese speaking students (<i>for non-Cantonese speaking Students</i>)  CAES9925. Academic and professional literacies in social work  Two to Three Common Core Courses selecting not more than one course from the same Area of Inquiry  Remaining credits are for disciplinary or free electives</p>
Year 3	<p>SOWK3015. Social work practice laboratory I  SOWK3016. Social work practice laboratory II: Field attachment  SOWK3030. Law and social administration  SOWK3109. Foundation of social work practice III  Zero to One Common Core Courses selecting not more than one course from the same Area of Inquiry  Remaining credits are for disciplinary or free electives</p>
Summer between Year 3 & 4	<p>SOWK4006. Field work placement I</p>
Year 4	<p>SOWK4002. Advanced social work practice I  SOWK4003. Advanced social work practice II  SOWK4007. Field work placement II  SOWK4055. Management in human service organizations  Remaining credits are for free electives</p>

## **The MSW programme**

The MSW degree is a two-year programme for full-time students and is extended to three years for part-time students. The curricula for full-time and part-time students differ only in schedule but not in content. The degree is designed to provide a first professional training in the theory and practice of social work for those who intend to make this their career or who are already in the profession. All the courses being designed are in accordance with the SWRB's Principles, Criteria and Standards for Recognizing Qualifications in Social Work. Below is the MSW Programme Curriculum Structure:

### **Foundation Curriculum**

#### **10 Required Core Courses**

1. SOWK6002 Social policy and administration
2. SOWK6003 Social work research
3. SOWK6243 Social services management
4. SOWK6303 Human behaviour and the social environment I
5. SOWK6304 Human behaviour and the social environment II
6. SOWK6305 The law, ethics and social work
7. SOWK6306 Theory and practice of social work - Casework
8. SOWK6307 Theory and practice of social work - Groupwork
9. SOWK6308 Theory and practice of social work - Community Development
10. SOWK7002 Social science theories for social work

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### **Advanced Concentration Curriculum**

2 concentration core courses + 2 elective courses  
from one of the following concentrations:

1. Children & youth in families and society
2. Family & marital counseling
3. Gerontology & rehabilitation
4. Health & mental health
5. Policy, community & management practice
6. Research & programme evaluation (Dissertation required)

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### **Field Education**

100 hours of pre-placement workshop – SOWK6300  
450 hours of foundation fieldwork placement – SOWK6225  
450 hours of advanced fieldwork placement – SOWK6231

#### 4. **General Description of Fieldwork Programme**

Fieldwork plays a very important part in both the BSW and MSW programmes. Both the BSW and MSW students undertake two periods of fieldwork practice. Full-time BSW and MSW students usually undertake a summer block placement in the summer before their final year of studies, followed by a concurrent placement during the term-time in their final year, while part-time MSW students usually undertake two concurrent placements during the term-time in their second and third year of study.

##### **Summer block placement for full time students (Both BSW and MSW)**

This consists of a ten-week period, normally from the beginning of June to mid-August with BSW students working 5 days and MSW students working 5 or 5.5 days a week. Within these working days, the students, with the consent of fieldwork supervisor, may be allowed to have time to do library or literature search if necessary.

##### **Summer placement for part-time MSW students**

For the part-time MSW students, whose application for changing a concurrent placement to a summer block placement has been approved, will undergo a summer block placement during the summer before their final year of studies or the summer in their graduating year. Students are required to finish the number of working hours within the period of summer block placement. Request for special arrangement will be considered only if sufficient and eligible reasons are submitted in written application.

##### **Concurrent placement for full-time students (Both BSW and MSW)**

This is made up of 25 and 28 weeks for BSW and MSW students respectively, and it is usually from late September to mid-March or early April. Students work on Tuesdays and Wednesdays in their placement agencies and attend classes during the rest of the week.

##### **Concurrent placement for part-time students (MSW only)**

Part-time MSW students are required to undertake two concurrent placements during their studies. Each concurrent placement is made up of 450 hours within twenty-eight weeks (16 hours per week) throughout the first and second semesters in the second and final year of study.

Students may be placed alone or in a group of two or more, and fieldwork supervisors are responsible for the field teaching. The fieldwork supervisor can either be employed directly by the University or an agency staff member appointed to act on the university.

The fieldwork programme is designed in such a way that individual students will, as far as possible, experience variety in their fieldwork placements, in different settings, dealing with a wide range of

problems and situations, and have opportunities to learn how to use at least two methods of social work intervention.

## **5. Agency-HKU Collaboration**

### **5.1 Communication / Co-ordination**

The Department communicates and liaises with agencies on general matters related to fieldwork for its social work students mainly through the Director/Deputy Director of Field Instruction.

The Director/Deputy Director of Field Instruction explores with agency responsible personnel the suitability of various service units in receiving social work students for fieldwork practice. The Director/Deputy Director of Field Instruction will put up the Department's requests and negotiates the details. Final detailed arrangements are usually confirmed in writing about four weeks before a placement begins.

The direct supervision of the student social workers' activities in the placement unit is the responsibility of the fieldwork supervisor, with the co-operation of the agency staff concerned (see section 5.2). While day to day operational problems can usually be discussed and resolved among the fieldwork supervisors and agency staff in the placement unit, the coordinator of field instruction is responsible for monitoring the overall progress of fieldwork. Complex problems or issues can be brought to the attention of the Director for further discussion and follow-up.

The Department sees the necessity to tailor the fieldwork programme according to changing needs and current developments in the field. Therefore the Director of Field Instruction will regularly consult agencies and other related organisations, in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the field placements.

### **5.2 Division of Responsibilities at the Operational Level:**

At the operational level, the fieldwork supervisor carries out the necessary tasks in supporting and training the student to fulfill the requirement of fieldwork. He/She is required to conduct weekly supervision sessions with the student in the placement unit, as far as time and physical conditions permit. Unless he/she is the unit-in-charge, the fieldwork supervisor will need to work in close co-operation with the in-charge of the service unit receiving the students to create a favourable learning environment for the students and facilitate their ongoing work. The areas for co-operation and the aspects in which the assistance and support of the in-charge are earnestly requested are depicted in the following sub-sections:

### **5.2.1 Physical Facilities and Administrative Support**

The agency is expected to provide the necessary space and physical facilities for the students' learning and working. Students need somewhere to keep their belongings, somewhere to sit and write, somewhere suitable to conduct interviews, groups and meetings, etc. The fieldwork supervisor also needs a suitable place to give regular supervision to students.

The agency is expected to allow the students to use agency equipments and resources in accordance to needs arising from the work assignments.

The agency is expected to reimburse students for expenses incurred in carrying out approved programmes and assignments (e.g. travelling expenses, materials). Other administrative support such as occasional secretarial help for essential reports and documents etc. will be most appreciated.

### **5.2.2 Preparation**

The fieldwork supervisor will usually visit the agency just before the commencement of a placement in order to conduct the necessary preparation work with the support from the unit-in-charge. The tasks that are in need of joint participation from the unit-in-charge at this stage may include:

- sharing information about the placement students,
- sharing information about the updated situation of the placement unit,
- division of labour in arranging suitable orientation programmes for student,
- selection of assignments that facilitate the learning of the students and match the agency's need,
- sharing other information specific to the particular service or placement unit so that the fieldwork supervisor can convey such information to students during the pre-placement briefing.

### **5.2.3 Orientation**

The agency is requested to co-operate with the fieldwork supervisor in arranging an orientation programme for students at the beginning of placements. The exact nature of the programmes and the division of responsibility between the agency and the fieldwork supervisor will vary from setting to setting. In general, the orientation about the agency's organisational and service delivery structures will be the main concern of the agency. These may include the following aspects:

- introduction about agency mission, organisation framework, function and practice,
- introduction about the service delivery system of the placement unit and the

- key personnel relating to the students,
- briefing about the relevant administrative procedures,
  - introducing the students to staff, clients and relevant outside agencies with appropriate specifications of status and role,
  - community walks in the vicinity of the placement setting. Visits to relevant outside agencies are normally arranged by the fieldwork supervisor, with suggestions from the agency staff, if necessary.

The agency can use a variety of means to conduct the orientation programmes. Introductory talks, films, discussion, inter-unit visits and reading materials such as manuals, agency reports and recordings, are found to be useful and stimulating to students. Students often benefit more from programmes that are spread over the initial weeks rather than concentrated in the first few days, as they can relate the new information to their own experience and integrate them more satisfactorily.

#### **5.2.4 Monitoring Ongoing Work**

Though the fieldwork supervisor is chiefly responsible for giving professional supervision to students, the assistance of the unit-in-charge in giving administrative guidance and on-the-spot feedback is also essential to the students' learning. Co-operation from the unit-in-charge in the following areas are especially requested:

- explaining to students the relationship between their assignments and the unit's other services,
- giving direct on-the-spot feedback to student about their performance in carrying out administrative procedure,
- creating ongoing opportunities to facilitate students' integration and adjustment to the service and agency e.g. inviting students to staff meeting,
- sharing with the fieldwork supervisor, from time to time, about the students' adjustment to the placement setting; task and time management; punctuality and work attitude; relationship inside and outside agency,
- co-operating with the fieldwork supervisor to review the suitability of the assignments and make modification if necessary.

#### **5.2.5 Evaluation**

Evaluation of students will be conducted in mid-placement period as well as the end of the placement. The fieldwork supervisor, unit-in-charge or a relevant person from the agency and the student should be present in both the mid-placement and the final evaluation meetings. It is expected that mutual feedback about the students' performance, comments on the arrangement of the placement



the fieldwork supervisor and suggestions on future improvements can be formulated in the evaluation meetings. It is also a usual practice for the fieldwork supervisor to consult the opinion of the unit-in-charge on the students' performance in formulating his evaluation of the students. An "Agency feedback form on the student's performance" (A-09) has therefore been designed to facilitate the gathering of data in this aspect.

## **6. Students' Responsibilities in Fieldwork Placement**

### **6.1 Responsibility to Agency**

#### **6.1.1 General**

Students are expected to act responsibly towards the agency, they are required to represent the agency appropriately to the community, such that, their action, behaviour and style of dress reflect acceptable agency practice.

Students are expected to comply with agency policies and procedures and to carry out requirements normally asked of agency staff, which includes observing basic work ethics, meeting administrative requirements such as report writing, record-keeping and so forth.

Students are expected to co-operate with agency staff. If the students are working in a team or in a multi-disciplinary setting, they are expected to contribute constructively as a team member and to be responsible for keeping others informed of their work.

Students work normal agency hours on fieldwork days, but they must be prepared to work irregular hours or on weekends when necessary. Compensation leave is given for overtime work, which should be taken as soon as possible and not accumulated.

#### **6.1.2 Sick Leave and Time Off**

Students follow the normal practice of submitting a medical certificate if they are off sick for more than two consecutive placement days. Time off, for special reasons, is given at the discretion of the fieldwork supervisor. However, a student misses in total more than two days of fieldwork practice, for any reason, will be asked to make up for the days of fieldwork placement missed.

## **6.2 Responsibility to Client System**

Students should introduce themselves as “Student-Social-Workers” (實習社工) to the clients unless this practice contradicts the agency’s advice. In this case, the agency’s rule should be followed.

The students are expected to assume full responsibility for their professional activities and behaviours, with the understanding that they will be supervised by the fieldwork supervisors. It is the responsibility of the fieldwork supervisors to ensure that assignments are within the students’ capacity.

Students have the responsibility to ensure that the client data are kept confidential, in line with the ethical practice of the profession and the requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, 1995. The attached “Record-keeping: Guidelines for Students in Field Practice” (A-05) spells out in detail the procedures that the students and the fieldwork supervisors should follow in handling this matter.

## **6.3 Responsibility for Learning**

### **6.3.1 Supervision**

Regular supervision, individually or in group, of one to 1.5 - 2 hours per week is provided by the fieldwork supervisors. Students are required to attend these weekly sessions; to be properly prepared to submit any written assignments 24 hours ahead and to take initiative in bringing up issues/problems for discussion.

### **6.3.2 Other Learning Opportunities**

Students are expected to seek learning opportunities outside supervision. Whenever possible, they should attend agency meetings and staff development programmes. They should also initiate visits to the community and other organisations relevant to their work.