

Introduction

The subject **EDU5005 School and Community Learning** serves two important functions:

- (i) To provide valuable opportunities for students to gain specialist knowledge and experience, and to explore, develop, evaluate, and improve their teaching strategies, and/or participate in other teaching-related activities discussed in university classes. Students are expected to gain practical knowledge of policies and practices in specialist education and gain knowledge about the provision of specialist services within mainstream schools or organisations.
- (ii) To form the basis of most of the mandatory fieldwork experience required for registration as a teacher in Victoria under the [Victorian Institute of Teaching \(VIT\)](#) guidelines.

The successful completion of supervised professional experience and related fieldwork experiences is a requirement of the Master of Education (Inclusion and Diversity). La Trobe University students will undertake their placement which is negotiated with the Subject Coordinator and the placement setting.

From the La Trobe University perspective, these placement experiences differ in some respects from the usual placement experiences undertaken in a student's earlier years of teacher preparation. It is assumed that students in the **Master of Education (Inclusion and Diversity)** will have already acquired beginning teacher competence; it is also acknowledged that some students undertaking this course will be experienced teachers upgrading their qualifications. The expectations for the placement proceed on the assumptions that students are expected to take greater responsibility for their own professional development and be able to demonstrate this. Consequently, placements have a negotiated quality, apply an inquiry focus, and students are expected to incorporate professional self-reflective processes in a report on their placement experience.

Placement as *Negotiated*

Students are free to arrange a placement with a school at any time during the semester that is mutually convenient for the student and the school. Although placements are usually taken as a three-week block, this is not the only arrangement mode and indeed may not be the optimum arrangement in some settings. Students are encouraged to explore different possibilities for their placement, which in some circumstances may include out-of-normal hours work, e.g. participation on a school camp.

Placement can be undertaken in schools, pre-schools, human services agencies, supported employment agencies, or other suitable settings as discussed and approved with the Subject Coordinator. A qualified teacher must be available in the organisation to supervise the placement.

Placement as *Inquiry*

During placements students are expected to observe supervisors' and others' work and undertake duties consistent with their professional training. They will familiarise themselves with the aims, structure, and policies of the setting, learn of the work of other specialist

professionals with whom agency staff may liaise and work effectively as a member of a professional team.

While they have the general task of managing the planning and teaching, supervision, and related agendas throughout their placement period, **in addition**, they are expected to develop a particular ***inquiry focus***, and to report on that.

For example, if undertaking a placement in a ***specialist school***, the focus may be to explore the contribution which a particular program or an exploration of collaborative teacher-parent relationships in a special setting. In a ***mainstream school setting*** where there is an Inclusion teacher, students may seek to explore how this school-wide resource works with other teachers, with educational support staff, with outside specialists, and with parents. In a ***non-school setting***, the learning focus may be to choose to explore the ways in which that agency networks with schools or personnel from the schooling system.

In the time allocated at the setting, students should use their own specific learning focus to gain relevant experience and to negotiate their own professional development around that identified agenda. It is important to remember that during a special education placement, students are not solely a practitioner building their professional teaching skills, but also an investigator. Their Placement Report needs to reflect both these aspects.

Placement as *Action Learning and Professional Self-Reflection*

Preparation as a professional in teaching students with disabilities includes a capacity to develop effective professional self-reflection skills. The development of such skills is fostered through a variety of means: through students gaining confidence in their ability to work effectively in classrooms, schools or other agencies, through professional mentoring, through being able to undertake successful collaborative activities with colleagues and students, and via the evaluation of programs.

In school settings, there is also a need for teachers to gain confidence in their ability to become professionally creative, innovative, and enterprising, and to demonstrate initiative, and an ability to develop diverse ways of applying their knowledge. There is no greater need than in students with special needs. The capacity to develop strong professional self-reflection skills is one of the foundations in the development of these qualities. In undertaking these placements students should be open to developing opportunities to be able to undertake some activities in innovative ways. Part of their reflective practice may revolve around a particular learning focus. For example, during a Specialist Setting placement, the particular learning focus might be about students' transition processes from school in late adolescence. Towards this end, students might participate in small group discussions with students at the school about their current programs and their expectations, aspirations, knowledge, and fears about life beyond school. This knowledge might then contribute to their thoughts about themselves as a teacher and how they will effectively prepare young adults for transition.

Role of the School or Agency

Supervising staff are asked to maintain an overview of the student's progress with the placement consistent with the objectives outlined in the student's placement proposal and complete the supervisors report.

Supervisors should be aware that students may use these reports for inclusion in their personal Curriculum Vitae.

Both these placements are assessed as either 'Ungraded Pass' or 'Unsatisfactory' and accurate descriptive comments provide an essential component for student development.

In *school settings*, students are expected to gain as wide an experience as possible with respect to the individual students they will be working with and assisting. So as part of the total teaching arrangements it would be expected that students be given opportunities to manage the learning in a variety of ways. This might include taking responsibility for the whole class group to undertake as appropriate, small group work discussion with significant adults within the school or participation in special activities such as excursions, and inclusion in any scheduled *Program Support Group*.

The *Supervising Teacher Report* should be completed at the end of the placement, following discussion with the student. See Assessment and Supervising Teacher Report in this Guidebook.

Descriptive comments from supervisors will contribute to a student's overall assessment and their suitability for this placement.

Assessment & Supervising Teacher Report

Assessment is based on the satisfactory completion of each of the following:

- (i) The student's [Placement Proposal](#).
- (ii) The **student's Learning journal** needs to be submitted on LMS 3 weeks after the completion of the placement.
- (iii) **The Supervising Teacher Report.**

The Supervising Teacher is sent a copy of the report upon confirmation of the placement. It is to be completed and returned to Placement Operations (Education Team) via email at education.placements@latrobe.edu.au on the final day of the PST's placement.

To indicate that the student has read the report both the Supervising Teacher and the student sign the form before returning it to the Placement Operations (Education) office at the University. This should be done promptly to facilitate submission of results.

It is important that the Supervising Teacher Report form is completed before the student leaves the school. Three copies of the form should be made: one for the University, one for the student

and one for the school's records. The supervising teacher/school placement coordinator will then return the form to the University on the final day of the PST's placement.

Return the completed Supervising Teacher Report form:

email to: education.placements@latrobe.edu.au

Support to Schools, Supervising Teachers and Students

Prior to the beginning of the placement all schools and education and care services, supervising teachers and students are given a link to this Professional Experience portfolio which provides the essential information for students on placement. It outlines the duties of the supervising teacher, student and University to ensure each party is aware of their responsibilities in relation to the professional experience and ensures both students and supervising teachers are aware that they have access to a team of dedicated La Trobe University staff who provide ongoing support throughout the term of the professional experience.

Additionally, there is a Placement Operations (Education) office at La Trobe University able to provide support and guidance to our schools and education and care services, supervising teachers and students. Our Placement Operations team will maintain ongoing communication with the schools and education and care services and supervising teachers during the professional experience, through a variety of mediums including, phone, email, teams video-link.

Additional Support for the Student

Concerned about the student's progress or approach?

Supervising Teachers or Placement Coordinators are to follow these procedures should there be any concern about a student's progress on placement.

If a supervising teacher or school or education and care service have any concerns about a student's progress or approach while on professional experience, a La Trobe University School of Education staff member needs to contact and/or visit the placement setting as soon as possible during the professional experience. As soon as any concern arises, please complete the *Additional Support for the Pre-Service Teacher* form and email it to:

ATTENTION: *Student Name* Placement Support

phone: + 61 3 9479 5904 email: education.placements@latrobe.edu.au

Download: [Additional Support for the Pre-Service Teacher form](#)

If the professional experience is still in progress at the point of receiving the *Additional Support* advice, the University will contact the setting as soon as possible so that appropriate support can be arranged.

This form is to alert La Trobe University of any concerns about the student's progress in this professional experience placement. The supervising teacher will identify major concerns and outline the action that needs to be taken to assist the student in successfully completing the professional experience.

The La Trobe University Academic Coordinator of Professional Experience or designated La Trobe University staff member will then contact the Supervising Teacher and/or School Placement Coordinator to discuss the matter. The student's failure to take any suggested action may lead to an UNSATISFACTORY GRADE.

Legal and Policy Matters

Information on the legal position of students.

Camps programs and excursions (in excess of one day) procedure.

Policy related to industrial action.

Workplace injuries.

Information on the legal position of students

It should be clearly understood that students are not to be used to replace teachers who are absent, or to free teachers to perform other duties around the school. Placing students in charge of children in these circumstances is not only contrary to the spirit of school experience but is in contravention of the Education Act.

Students working in schools have neither the protection of Department of Education insurance nor of workers' compensation provisions. Since they are employees neither of the organisation nor of the University, students are advised to avoid situations in which they assume individual responsibility for the safety of students.

An insurance policy for students operates which covers their regular university program including school experience. See Insurance Office: www.latrobe.edu.au/insurance/students. In order for this provision to operate, however, it is essential that students on professional experience undertake the program as set out in this manual.

Since the University is concerned that its students are fully protected legally at all times on school experience, it asks that supervising teachers ensure that they are always in a position to exercise responsibility for classes.

Camps programs and excursions (in excess of one day) procedure

The Office of the Provost encourages students to be involved in school camps programs provided there is no obvious conflict with their studies. The following conditions apply:

- The student's attendance on camp programs must be voluntary.
- The student can be counted in the staff-student ratio as defined by the Department of Education and Training and the School Council.
- There must be a registered practising teacher able to accept full responsibility for school camp programs and excursions.

- The roles and responsibilities of the student are clarified and understood by all staff and students prior to the commencement of the excursion.
- The student must not be left in sole charge of a group of students.
- The student must be able to plan, deliver and reflect on elements of the camp program.
- Students are primarily on professional experience to practice teaching and should not be viewed as substitute staff for multi-day camps. While one or two days of experience on camp would be a valuable experience, extended time (3 or more days) away from teaching is to be discouraged. Camps of more than three days should be approved by the relevant Subject Coordinator.

Policy related to industrial action

- Where a stop work strike occurs in a school or education and care service, students must not replace in a classroom, any teacher participating in such action.
- If a student is stopping work or on strike, he/she must notify the School of Education prior to such action.
- Any absences arising from the above situations must be made up under the guidance of the Placement Coordinator in the school or education and care service.

Workplace injuries

Very few students injure themselves while on placement. However, for those rare occurrences the following guidelines and information are essential:

- If a student is injured while on placement then they must report the injury to the appropriate person/people in the school or education and care service (including the student placement coordinator) and also to Placement Operations (Education) via the [Work Based Learning Placement Student Enquiry Form](#).
- If the injury is due to the school's negligence or carelessness, then the student is covered under the school's insurance. However, if the injury is not due to the school's negligence, then students are covered by La Trobe University's insurance. Students should contact the La Trobe University Insurance Office for details.
<https://www.latrobe.edu.au/insurance/students>

Contact for all professional experience queries:

Placement Operations (Education)
Office of the Provost
(03) 9479 5904
email: education.placements@latrobe.edu.au

Postal address

Placement Operations (Education)
Office of the Provost

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