

Department of Applied Social Sciences

# SOCIAL WORK

# FIELDWORK MANUAL

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**THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**Social Work**  
**Fieldwork Manual**

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## **1. PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL**

This manual details fieldwork policies and procedures of fieldwork for the Social Work Programmes. As practice teaching in fieldwork involves a large number of fieldwork supervisors, both faculty- and agency-based, together with the collaborative efforts of social welfare agencies, it is essential to clearly outline operational guidelines in the fieldwork process. It is intended for the use of fieldwork supervisors, faculty members and the Fieldwork Coordinating Team of the Department of Applied Social Sciences (APSS) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU).

This manual should be used with the flexibility it allows. Users are urged to give due recognition to the special characteristics of placement units, the teaching styles of individual supervisors, and the learning needs and styles of individual students. In addition, it should be read and followed with close reference to the programme scheme of the Social Work programmes.

## **2. FIELDWORK IN THE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMMES**

### **2.1 Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Work (BASW)**

#### **2.1.1 The Programme**

##### Objectives

BASW aims to educate students for a career as professional social workers who are competent, flexible, versatile and innovative in facing the challenges brought about by rapid social changes. The programme is thus structured to prepare students to develop a solid foundation and discipline-specific knowledge in social sciences and social work; a repertoire of professional competence and skills and a firm commitment to social justice, ethical and social responsibilities as well as a humanitarian orientation.

Students will become effective, efficient and caring practitioners in social work, responsible for analyzing, formulating and implementing social work intervention for the improvement of the social well-being of the deprived individuals, families and communities within the social context of Hong Kong and Mainland China.

##### Intended Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of their study, students on this programme should be able to:

- (a) Acquire a sound knowledge base in social sciences;
- (b) Assess and respond competently to social issues and problems from a multi-dimensional perspective, critically drawing on a range of theoretical and methodological approaches from social work and the social sciences;
- (c) Recognize and perform the various roles of social workers as deemed desirable in a rapidly changing social context locally and globally;
- (d) Appreciate the influence of culture on human values, behavior and their ways of coping with life and design innovative appropriate intervention plans;

- (e) Apply concepts and skills in supervision, management, planning and research in social work practice;
- (f) Articulate the core values of social work and to uphold the principle of social justice;
- (g) Commit to ethical and responsible social work practices;
- (h) Apply in a flexible and creative manner information, knowledge, theories and resources for their continued professional development in social work;
- (i) Demonstrate competence in using written and spoken Chinese and English as required in relevant professional settings effectively; and
- (j) Become a life-long active learner.

For more details, please refer to the student Programme Requirement Document.

### Alignment of Fieldwork with Intended Learning Outcomes

As one of the core teaching and learning strategies, fieldwork is a mandatory component in alignment with the BASW intended learning outcomes and fulfills requirements of the Hong Kong Social Workers Registration Board as well as the mandatory work-integrated education (WIE) component of the University curriculum. Through fieldwork, students will:

- (a) Be exposed to the real-life social work professional practice context;
- (b) Sharpen their critical, analytical and reflective abilities in the differential use of social science knowledge and intervention theories in direct practice;
- (c) Cultivate a sense of passion in understanding human predicaments and social problems; and
- (d) Develop a sense of vocation in the professional practice of social work.

#### **2.1.2 Objectives of Fieldwork**

According to the BASW curriculum structure, there are two fieldwork placements, in Stage Two and Stage Four of the progression pattern. Students embark upon real-life practice under the guidance and supervision of qualified supervisor assigned by the APSS Fieldwork Co-ordination Team.

#### Fieldwork I

This subject is taken in Semester 3 of Stage Two of the normal progression pattern for full-time study for HKDSE entry students. Carrying six credits, the objectives of Fieldwork I are that students should:

- (a) Acquire the basic knowledge, values, and attitudes essential to fulfilling a variety of social work roles;
- (b) Develop beginning competence in generic social work practice;
- (c) Show a sense of social responsibility; and
- (d) Demonstrate the beginning competence in relating, testing, and integrating classroom knowledge to practice in the field.

## Fieldwork II

Having acquired relevant knowledge through social science and supporting subjects in Stage Two and Three of their study, in Fieldwork II students will be equipped with the intellectual tools for reflecting on and analyzing social, organizational and policy contexts. These conceptual building blocks, as well as espoused theories, should expand students' understanding of human behavior and its implications.

In addition, as students are placed in a field setting relating to their elective studies, they are expected to acquire entry-level knowledge and intervention skills focused on the needs and problems of a specific client system. With additional input from the Social Work Theory and Practice subjects, students will become increasingly oriented to their anticipated work roles and more competent in such skill areas as transforming concepts and theories to the real-world; transferring theories from one discourse to another, and problem-solving.

The major aim of Fieldwork II is to produce a professionally reflective, self-evaluating, knowledgeable, competent and developing social worker who is adequately prepared to address the needs and problems of a society in transition. The specific objectives of fieldwork are to enable students to:

- (a) Relate and integrate theory and knowledge derived from social work studies, the social sciences, and supporting subjects to the field situation;
- (b) Examine and assimilate professional attitudes and values which affect effective functioning of the various social worker roles;
- (c) Develop competence in generic social work practice;
- (d) Reflect on social work values and ethical principles and put them into practice; and
- (e) Build a sense of identity with the social work profession.

## Fieldwork III

This subject is comparable to Fieldwork II but named differently to indicate that students taking this placement are those who have already completed two fieldwork placements in an Associate Degree or Higher Diploma in Social Work before they are admitted to BASW.

## Offshore placement

Offshore placement, usually in the form of summer block placements, is arranged to promote an awareness of the international perspectives of social work and an appreciation of practice in different cultures. The number of offshore placement places is limited and depend on the availability of funds and fieldwork opportunities outside Hong Kong. Students are invited to apply for offshore placement in Semester 1 of each academic year and an interview panel will select the suitable candidates. Selected students are assigned to undertake fieldwork in welfare agencies overseas or in Mainland China. Since fieldwork is also the mandatory WIE component of the programme, successful candidates may apply for a financial subsidy through the Office of Careers and Placement Services.

## **2.2 Master of Social Work (MSW)**

### **2.2.1 The Programme**

#### Objectives

The MSW Programme aims to develop students' competence and resilience as professional social work practitioners. Students will learn to respond proactively to the challenges and changes in society in general and in the social work field in particular. Students will be encouraged to integrate theories and practice, to generate new insights to improve practice and to evolve a personalized approach to practice. The emphasis of the teaching and learning is to cultivate generic scholarship in social work practice for the development of competent and reflective practitioners.

To integrate theories and practice in social work practice with a broad knowledge base does not imply direct technical solutions to practical situations. Instead, it implies a systematic process to facilitate awareness among social workers of the issues and problems confronting them and to enable them to develop the ability to relate these issues to a holistic understanding of social work practice. The essence of this kind of development is to create reflective social workers who are able to think about, articulate, be self-critical of, and constantly evaluate their application of theories and knowledge in different contexts, and to evolve their own personal perspectives and approaches to professional practice.

#### Intended Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of study, students will be able to:

- (a) Acquire a contextualized understanding of social work practice in the political, economic, and social contexts of Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland.
- (b) Develop the humanistic value commitment of professional workers in order to acquire both the qualities and the ability to deal with the competing values and ethical dimensions of decision making and also the capacity to address the tensions, uncertainties, and conflicts arising from the decision-making process.

- (c) Integrate a broad foundation of knowledge with the professional knowledge and skills of social work practice in order to resolve problems with clients in specific service settings.
- (d) Develop the attitudes and methods required to continue to learn, change, and grow as a person and as a professional.

For more details, please refer to student admission cohort's Programme Requirement Document.

### 2.2.2 **Objectives of Fieldwork**

#### Fieldwork I

MSW students will undertake MSW Fieldwork I in the second year (Semester 1 & 2) of their three-year part-time studies. In total, there will be 400 hours in the fieldwork unit and students need to attend a series of workshops before placement. Students will be matched to non-government organizations, government departments, and social service organizations for their placement. Only those students who are registered social workers (RSW) can apply for attached placement in Fieldwork I.

By the time the placement commences, students should have acquired, through the subjects in human behaviour & social sciences, social welfare systems & social policy, the tools for reflecting on and analysing the social contexts in general, and the policy and organisational contexts in particular. The conceptual building blocks, as well as the espoused theories, should illuminate an understanding of human behaviour and its implications. Having taken the subjects of Critical Introduction to Social Work, Advanced Social Work Theory & Practice I, and the Social Work Practice Workshop, students should become oriented to the philosophy, values, skills, and knowledge of social work practice.

In addition, students are expected to acquire the knowledge and intervention skills focused around the complex needs and problems of a client system. Students will become increasingly oriented to their anticipated work roles and more competent in such skill areas as translating concepts and theories to the real world; transferring theories from one discourse to another, and problem-solving.

The major aim of Fieldwork I is a beginning phase of educating a professionally reflective, self-evaluating, knowledgeable, competent, and developing social worker who is starting to address the complex needs and problems of society with conflicting values. The specific objectives of Fieldwork I are to enable the students to:

- (a) Practice according to social work values and ethical principles;
- (b) Demonstrate a sense of awareness of social problems and current issues towards the well-being of people;
- (c) Acquire knowledge relevant to social work practice;
- (d) Develop competencies in generic social work practice;

- (e) Integrate knowledge and theories to practice; and
- (f) Accepting accountability in service delivery and their own learning.

### Fieldwork II

MSW students will undertake MSW Fieldwork II in the third year (Semester 1 & 2) of their three-year part-time studies. Students are required to fulfill 400 hours in the fieldwork unit and attend relevant workshops relating to fieldwork. The fieldwork placement unit must be a social service organization which is different from their first fieldwork placement. An alternate mode of Fieldwork Placement could also be adopted (concurrent or block placement) to maximize the learning opportunities for part-time students. Students may also choose to do their fieldwork in overseas countries.

Other than the subjects taken in year one, the students should have acquired, through the subjects in Practice Research and the fieldwork placement in year two, the knowledge and skills in analysing complex social problems. Students may begin to focus their efforts on a specific client group which he/she feels interested in. MSW Fieldwork II serves as a practice opportunity for students to realize and actualize intervention strategies and skills with social work values and a code of practice. In this fieldwork placement, individual students will develop his/her own personalized theory or style of practice.

The major aim of MSW Fieldwork II is the completion of educating a professionally reflective, knowledgeable, competent and developing social worker who is able to address the complex needs and problems of society with conflicting values. The specific objectives of Fieldwork II are to enable the students to:

- (a) Internalize professional values, attitudes and to enhance the effective functioning of the various roles of social workers;
- (b) Reflect on social problems and current issues from different perspective;
- (c) Develop competencies in social work practice with a specific client group and expand their knowledge base;
- (d) Consolidate their in-depth understanding of the needs and problems of a specific client system and develop the skills in conducting social work tasks from data collection to termination;
- (e) Evaluate and reflect on the constraints of concepts and theories when applying to a specific client group; and
- (f) Critically reflect on learning needs, supervision, and accountability in service delivery

### Attached placement

Part-time students with a full-time job in relevant social service organizations may consider taking attached placement if they decide not to take on a fieldwork placement arranged by the Fieldwork Team. However, students must apply within the said period announced at the beginning of each



academic year. Each application will be assessed individually according to the Principles and Criteria for Application of Attached Placement in G02.

### Offshore placement

Offshore placements, usually in the form of summer block placements, are arranged to promote an awareness of the international perspectives of social work and an appreciation of practice in different cultures. The number of places for offshore placements is limited, depending on the availability of funds and fieldwork opportunities outside of Hong Kong. Students are invited to apply for offshore placement for fieldwork II in Semester 1 of each academic year and a screening exercise is organized to select the suitable candidates. Selected students are assigned to undertake fieldwork in welfare agencies overseas. Successful candidates with financial difficulty may apply for a financial subsidy from APSS. The financial subsidy from APSS is subject to available funding for the current year and vetting is required.

## **3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN FIELDWORK**

To ensure achievement of the fieldwork objectives noted above and to facilitate a student's effective learning, fieldwork must be perceived as a joint venture by all parties concerned, which necessitates ongoing communication among APSS, agencies, fieldwork supervisors and students. Their roles are often complementary, each contributing to a sound educational experience in fieldwork practice teaching.

### **3.1 APSS**

Through its Fieldwork Coordinating Team, APSS is responsible for the planning, liaison, development, and coordination of fieldwork placements for various Social Work Programmes. The Team, comprising the Director of Fieldwork Education and Fieldwork Coordinators, (contacts can be obtained from the website of Fieldwork Resources Website: <http://www.polyu.edu.hk/apss/spis/>) performs the following duties:

#### **3.1.1 Projection and confirmation of placement**

- (a) Solicit students' interest and choice of placement settings.
- (b) Explore and assess agencies for fieldwork placement.
- (c) Make placement requests to and confirm placement offers with agencies.
- (d) Confer with agency staff regarding the learning opportunities for students generally, thus preparing for the fieldwork supervisor to follow-up regarding specific assignments.

#### **3.1.2 Preparation for commencement of placement**

- (a) Match students and fieldwork supervisors to placement units.
- (b) Inform agencies, fieldwork supervisors and students about fieldwork matching.

- (c) Prepare students and fieldwork supervisors for the commencement of placements by planning and convening preparatory workshops and fieldwork supervisors' meetings.

### **3.1.3 Monitoring the progress of placement**

- (a) Plan and convene the fieldwork supervisors' meeting(s) to review the progress of placement.
- (b) Provide consultation on policies and procedures to fieldwork supervisors, students, and agency staff during fieldwork.
- (c) Handle special cases such as prolonged sickness of a student or a student with learning problems and, if necessary, refer the case to the respective Programmer Leader or Assistant Programme Leader(s).
- (d) Act as mediators in the case of formal or informal appeals, handle disputes and disagreements on fieldwork supervision and assessment, and to resolve any other issues relating to fieldwork placement.
- (e) Review the suitability of a fieldwork placement unit and solicit feedback from the agency, the fieldwork supervisor and students.
- (f) Facilitate fieldwork learning by planning and convening preparatory workshops for students.

### **3.1.4 Coordination and development of Fieldwork Supervisors**

- (a) Coordinate with fieldwork supervisors to ensure they take up active roles in fieldwork supervisor meetings, preparatory workshops, integrative workshops, and other fieldwork related activities.
- (b) Plan and convene staff development programmes on fieldwork practice teaching.
- (c) Coordinate activities (e.g., visits) which are of common concern to supervisors in general or to groups of supervisors in one district or one particular client group.

### **3.1.5 Administrative responsibilities**

- (a) Screen fieldwork project expenses and traveling claims submitted by students and endorsed by the supervisor.
- (c) Compile and revise fieldwork documentation, e.g., fieldwork manual and fieldwork evaluation form.
- (d) Represent fieldwork supervisors on the Board of Examiners.

## **3.2 The Agency**

Agencies are selected for their commitment and capacity to provide a suitable environment for student learning and professional development. Their key responsibilities are the following:

- (a) Provide a learning atmosphere where students are received as professionals under training.
- (b) Discuss with APSS the range of learning opportunities that can be provided to students.
- (c) Provide necessary support such as office space, materials, and equipment, so that students can fulfil their duties satisfactorily.
- (d) Provide students with resources to cover costs incurred while carrying out agency duties, for example travelling costs and project expenses, as agreed by the agency.
- (e) Arrange an agency orientation programme for students, in collaboration with the fieldwork supervisor and/or the fieldwork coordinator.
- (f) Facilitate student participation in agency events such as conferences, staff meetings and staff training sessions as appropriate.
- (g) Maintain close communication with APSS and the fieldwork supervisor, and offer continuous feedback and suggestions on aspects of the programme including with regard to general improvement of fieldwork supervision and academic curriculum review.
- (h) Provide feedback to APSS on the performance of students and comments on fieldwork coordination and supervision.

*In the social work curriculum, fieldwork placement is the mandatory practicum for social workers registration. Agencies offering fieldwork placement to students do not form an employer-employee relationship and thus is not regulated by the Minimum Wage Ordinance introduced in May 2011.*

### **3.3 The Fieldwork Supervisor**

The fieldwork supervisor is a vital resource in developing a sound educational experience for students throughout the learning process. The responsibilities of the fieldwork supervisor include:

#### **3.3.1 Engaging students in fieldwork**

- (a) Orientate students to the agency, its policies, and procedures in order that the students can begin their practice immediately.
- (b) Facilitate students' understanding and assessment of the community.
- (c) Facilitate students in preparing a learning contract that is mutually agreed between supervisor and student (ref. para. 4.3).
- (d) Assign tasks that will best meet students' educational needs.
- (e) Make available to students appropriate learning experiences such as agency visits and attendance at seminars, conferences and staff meetings.

#### **3.3.2 Supervision, evaluation and assessment**

- (a) Continuously assess the educational progress of students, i.e., their level of competence, their learning needs and the best way of achieving these.

- (b) Help students integrate theoretical knowledge and previous experiences with present practice.
- (c) Provide at least two supervision hours per week for each student in concurrent placement or 2.5 hours for summer block placement.  

Supervision hours should be direct contact hours with students and exclude time for reading written assignments. At least 50% of the total supervision hours should be conducted on-site and on an individual basis. Live supervision is encouraged. It is desired that regular supervision sessions be arranged and held in the fieldwork setting, so that regular, frequent, and timely contact with placement unit personnel can be assured.
- (d) Conduct the mid-term evaluation with students;
  - (i) Review the progress of placement with reference to the learning contract;
  - (ii) Revise the learning contract with students if necessary;
  - (iii) Give specific assessment comments on students' performance.
  - (iv) Submit Mid-term Evaluation Report (F01) via CLIPS (for Concurrent Placement only).
- (e) Conduct a final evaluation with students to assess their performance.
- (f) Submit Final Evaluation Report (F02) together with the mark sheet.
- (g) Except for being selected as full sampling for internal moderation purpose, supervisor will need to select and submit seven samples of students' written work to APSS. In general, samples of a student's work should be selected from the work proposals, recordings, and evaluation reports. For students whose work needs to be further examined, the supervisor should consult the fieldwork coordinator regarding the type and quantity of work to be selected as samples.

### **3.3.3 Administrative responsibilities**

- (a) Participate in APSS supervisors' meetings, orientation, and staff development seminars/programmes and, when necessary, attend the Board of Examiners meetings.
- (b) Liaise closely with the fieldwork coordinator concerned, especially when specific student learning difficulties are identified.
- (c) Recommend students claim travelling expenses, as appropriate (for BASW only).
- (d) Submit claim forms and/or report any accident promptly.

## **3.4 The Students**

Students in fieldwork are expected to conduct themselves in a way that reflects their accountability to the clients, the agency, the community, and APSS. In addition, they should play an active role in their own learning and demonstrate initiative that is commensurate with the responsibilities of a social worker.

The students' responsibilities include:

- (1) Preparing themselves with adequate time to be involved in the placement. Students have to fulfil the 400-hours required for placement and will most likely fail the subject if this requirement is not met
- (2) Working within agency policies and procedures
- (3) Observing the agency's working hours
- (4) Preparing a learning contract and completing assignments responsibly
- (5) Attending orientation meetings, seminars, workshops, and conferences and other gatherings as convened by APSS or the agency
- (6) Maintaining suitable and timely records/reports/recordings accounting for their progress in completing assignments
- (7) Participating actively in supervisory sessions and preparing adequately for such occasions.
- (8) Participating actively in the ongoing, mid-term and final evaluation of their performance, and submitting a self-evaluation report to their fieldwork supervisors during the mid-term and at the end of the placement (ref. Guidelines for Student Self Evaluation in Fieldwork – G03)
- (9) Submitting the Student Questionnaire on Fieldwork (F03) to Fieldwork Coordinators to facilitate future planning for placement
- (10) Taking the initiatives to approach the fieldwork coordinators in order to report and discuss any issues encountered during the placement period

#### **4. MAJOR TASKS IN FIELDWORK PROCESS**

The fieldwork process comprises several major tasks, which are outlined below.

##### **4.1 Pre-placement Induction**

Pre-placement induction for students involves two types of activities:

###### **4.1.1 Preparatory Workshops**

The Fieldwork Coordinating Team arranges two specific fieldwork placement induction workshops for students prior to each fieldwork placement. These workshops offer an overview of available services for placement practice and familiarize students with the fieldwork-specific system, the Clinical Placement System (CLIPS). Furthermore, the workshops detail the fieldwork placement process, encompassing the goals, expectations, and requirements of the placement. This introduction helps students understand what to expect and prepares them for the upcoming fieldwork experience.

In addition to these two induction workshops, a series of preparatory workshops are organized before and during Fieldwork I and Fieldwork II to enhance students' knowledge and skills for placement practice. The Social Workers Registration Board has established specific requirements for fieldwork placements that the social work programme must adhere to for qualification recognition. The workshop topics for

BASW and MSW programme can be found in reference to G04. Through these preparatory workshops, we aim to achieve the following objectives:

- Address the ethical considerations and professional standards that social work students must adhere to during their fieldwork placement, including standards for technology in social work practice;
- Familiarize students with the documentation requirements of the fieldwork placement and provide training on maintaining accurate and confidential records while adhering to legal and ethical guidelines;
- Equip students with specific knowledge and skills relevant to their fieldwork context and practice.

#### **4.1.2 Pre-placement session of fieldwork supervisors and students**

Other than making practical arrangements with the students (e.g., when to report for duty on the first day of fieldwork), the pre-placement session between supervisor and students serves the major function of helping students to move into the placement with greater ease, and of giving them a chance to briefly meet their supervisor in person before the placement starts.

This session may also be used by the fieldwork supervisor for:

- (a) Assigning relevant readings;
- (b) Planning with students the work schedule for the beginning weeks of placement; and
- (c) Helping students to start thinking and drawing up specific learning objectives, based on
  - (i) Students' perceptions of their own needs, and
  - (ii) Information from the course coordinator or tutor relating to student weaknesses and strengths.

## **4.2 Orientation Programmes**

Orientation programmes are usually of two types: (a) those planned by the fieldwork supervisor, in consultation with the agency and the student, to familiarize the student with the agency and the service unit to which they are attached; (b) those related to the neighbourhood of the placement unit, and to other organizations in Hong Kong operating similar services.

### **4.2.1 Agency orientation**

- (a) Background information on the agency services and functions should be given to students prior to the commencement of the placement or as soon as possible thereafter. Students should also assume the responsibility of become acquainted with the agency.

- (b) On commencement of placement, the supervisor has the dual role of helping the students to integrate into the agency while at the same time helping the agency to accept and, as far as possible, to accommodate students' learning needs. Depending on the availability of resources, agency personnel may be invited to contribute to the orientation programme.
- (c) Students should be helped to familiarize themselves with:
  - (i) The objectives and functions of the agency, the target clientele, and their primary needs, as well as the rules and regulations of the agency/unit;
  - (ii) The organizational structure of the agency, the various types, and levels of staff and their respective roles;
  - (iii) Procedures for compiling all agency-required reports in compliance with any specific requirements of the agency; and
  - (iv) The agency support staff who can then refer calls to the students.
- (d) Students should have access to important reference materials such as procedure manuals, directories and information regarding community resources. Students should learn to use these resources in order to assist them in helping their clients.

#### **4.2.2 Additional orientation visits**

Most students find it helpful in participate in orientation visits to agencies of related services and to key community resources. Such visits help to broaden the outlook of students especially if a discussion or a reporting back session can be held afterward. However, orientation visits do not need to take place all at the same time in the initial phase of the placement, nor should they distract the students from completion of assignments.

### **4.3 Learning Contract**

A learning plan enables students to begin considering their expectations regarding their forthcoming placement and to translate their expectations into real learning tasks and process. With mutual agreement between the supervisor and student, the learning plan can be turned into a **learning contract** that helps to guide the progress of learning in placement.

#### **4.3.1 Functions of the learning contract**

Functions of a learning contract are as follows:

- (a) Encourage students to be aware of and responsible for their own learning needs;

- (b) Set realistic learning tasks and a progress plan that considers the needs and constraints of the agency, community, clients, and student in placement;
- (c) Facilitate a sharing and understanding between fieldwork supervisor and student of the mutual expectations of learning tasks, process, and progress in placement;
- (d) Improve standards in practice teaching and facilitate consistency and accountability in the supervisory relationship.

#### **4.3.2 Preparation and revision of learning contract**

Due to the supervisor's role in assessing a student's performance, with the supervisor usually being more knowledgeable about the placement, the learning tasks and process in placement tend to be prescribed by the fieldwork supervisor. Therefore, both the fieldwork supervisor and student should pay attention to the process of formulating the learning contract rather than just considering the end product. It should be emphasized that the fieldwork supervisor should make good use of this process not only to understand the learning needs of the student, but also to motivate the student to work out their own learning plan. However, the fieldwork supervisor and student should also make use of this opportunity to ensure effective communication of their mutual expectations. An open and sincere attitude on both sides is essential.

While drawing up the learning contract, the student should not focus exclusively on their own needs but rather on an appropriate balance among community needs, agency needs, client needs, and the student's own needs should be achieved. Moreover, realistic consideration should be given to agency and community resources, opportunities, and constraints, as well as the student's own personal strengths and weaknesses.

The learning contract, as prepared and agreed at the beginning of placement, is subject to revision, if appropriate, after a period of progress in placement (e.g., during the mid-term evaluation). Any revision should be mutually agreed by both the fieldwork supervisor and student, and a revised learning contract should be prepared.

#### **4.3.3 Contents of the learning contract**

The following areas are suggested to be included in a learning contract:

- (a) Knowledge of the service in Hong Kong, the community and agency/unit;
- (b) Knowledge of the client group;
- (c) Learning assignments and workload;
- (d) Knowledge and skills to be acquired by the end of placement;
- (e) Particular learning needs of the student;
- (f) Supervision arrangements; and
- (g) Evaluation and assessment.



The fieldwork supervisor and student can add in other areas as they consider appropriate. For specific guidelines delineating items for each area, please refer to Guideline for Learning Contract in Fieldwork (G05).

#### 4.4 Assignments

##### 4.4.1 Guiding principles in selecting appropriate assignments

In selecting assignments, the following suggestions can serve as guiding principles:

- (a) The tasks involved should be deemed manageable to students over the specified placement period. They should be appropriate to the objectives of the respective fieldwork and the level of competence and pace of learning of the individual student.
- (b) Assignment should provide students with substantial face-to-face contacts with the client system. Elements of planning, social welfare administration and small-scale social research can also be included as subsidiary learning opportunities.
- (c) Should circumstances allow, students should be given the opportunity to practise and gain competence in more than one intervention approach. This will enrich the student's experience in consolidating knowledge of and skills in different approaches to solving of problems.
- (d) The total fieldwork experience should ideally comprise a range of types of problems, ages of clients, and forms of treatment where feasible. It is advisable to allocate some new cases/groups/projects so that students will have the opportunity to follow the entire helping process. For those tasks transferred by agency staff, the goal of intervention should be made explicit to the students. In matching students to the placement setting, consideration is given to ensuring that students are likely to have substantial direct contact with client system related to student's choice of optional study. However, this does not imply confining student's exposure to one type of problem.
- (e) The tasks assigned should progress gradually from a simple to complex and from imposing lesser to greater demands on the students. Assignments requiring aspects such as inter-agency collaboration, teamwork with other professionals in secondary settings, multi-dimensional assessment skills with malfunctioning individuals and families, techniques for resolving negativism and hostility of a community, competence in modifying destructive interactional patterns, and effecting environmental changes are considered appropriate once students have become familiar with the field learning situation.
- (f) Opportunities for learning the differential use of self and the dynamic role of the social worker such as an enabler, advocate, and consultant should also be given. Similarly, learning tasks should provide opportunities for examining social work ethics and professional attitudes.

#### **4.4.2 BASW Fieldwork**

##### Fieldwork I

This fieldwork placement is designed for DSE entrants and senior year students of the full-time programme who usually have little social work experience. Although Stage Two study stresses experiential learning and opportunities for them to familiarize themselves with the social work field, still, students should be treated as a new worker and well-planned orientation programmes are necessary. As Fieldwork I serves a major integrative function after Stage Two Study, the fieldwork assignments should be related to this stage of the curriculum. In particular, the assignments should enable students to practise generic social work and employ the process model in social work intervention.

##### Fieldwork II

This placement is expected to be completed in the final year or Stage Four of study. Fieldwork assignments should be related to Stage Three and Four of the curriculum and the level of duties suitable for fresh graduates in workplace settings.

##### Fieldwork III

This placement is equivalent to Fieldwork II but is named differently to indicate that students taking this placement are those who have already completed two fieldwork placements in a sub-degree social work training programme before they are admitted to BASW.

#### **4.4.3 MSW Fieldwork**

##### Fieldwork I

As most of the MSW students do not have much experience in the social work field, the first fieldwork placement is designed for the non-social work degree holders who usually have no or limited social work experience. Although the first year of study stresses experiential learning and students are provided opportunities to familiarize themselves with the social work field, they should be treated as new workers and well-planned orientation programmes are necessary.

As for MSW Fieldwork, it serves a major integrative function for the year two students, the fieldwork assignments should be related to the curriculum of the first year. In particular, the assignments should enable the students to practice generic social work or employ the process model in social work intervention.

##### Fieldwork II

MSW students are required to complete MSW Fieldwork II in their third year of studies. Fieldwork assignments should always be related to the curriculum and the level of work required for beginning graduate social workers.

The MSW students are mature adults with working experience. Therefore, general principles developed for teaching adult learners such as adopting a

student-centered approach should be observed. In addition, the fieldwork situation may require the student to work with a specific client system, which is unfamiliar to the student. Therefore, students on their first entry into the present placement normally need a short period for recapitulation on those practice skills. During this period, the guidance and support of the supervisor are of paramount importance. After this initial period, the average student should be able to settle into the placement.

#### 4.4.4 **Workload**

In determining the overall assignment loading for students, the fieldwork supervisor should take into consideration:

- (a) The nature and level of complexity of the assignments;
- (b) The ability of the students;
- (c) The expectations of APSS and the agency;
- (d) A balance of service and learning; and
- (e) The need to train the students to shoulder the minimum workload required in a future job.

#### **Block Placement**

As a general guideline, the total workload for a summer block placement may consist of:

- (a) Six to eight cases; or
- (b) One group plus two to four cases, or one group plus one project/mass programme (depending on their scale), or two short-term groups; or
- (c) One to two projects (depending on their scale).

#### **Concurrent Placement**

- (a) Six to eight cases, or
- (b) One group plus two to four cases, or one group plus mass functions (depending on their scale), or two groups; or
- (c) One project plus one to two cases, or one project plus one group, or two projects.

The above guidelines are for reference only. The actual assignments may be a flexible combination of these scenarios, and the exact workload should be worked out between students and their fieldwork supervisors. Workload should increase gradually over the placement period. Normally, students are expected to devote at least half of their fieldwork time to direct service to clients. This may include preparing and conducting interviews, group sessions or programme sessions, as well as follow up actions.

#### **4.4.5 Additional learning experiences**

As far as possible, students should be encouraged to participate in the agency's staff meetings, case conferences, team meetings and other professional activities that may be of learning value.

#### **4.4.6 Guidelines on written assignments**

- (a) Types and workload of written assignments.

Written assignments are an integral part of fieldwork learning. Students must fulfil both agency and departmental requirements. Students should follow agency requirements on use of language regarding the filing of reports and records. English is the expected language used for written assignments except when the fieldwork agency requires otherwise. In addition, fieldwork recordings and reports which are to be selected as samples for submission to the external examiner should be prepared in English. Please refer to G08 on the Types of Assignments in Fieldwork. In determining the appropriate assignments for students, the fieldwork supervisor should consider the following:

- (i) The ability and efficiency of students displayed in their written work;
  - (ii) The learning effect of each written assignment;
  - (iii) The progress of fieldwork placement;
  - (iv) The difference between block and concurrent placement (i.e., the competing demands on students during concurrent placement making the pressure of the written work seem more acute); and
  - (v) The difference between the first and second placement (i.e., for the first placement the efficiency in the written work is usually lower as the students are less experienced).
- (b) Student difficulties coping with the requirements of a written assignment:

Students are encouraged to examine and discuss any issues they encounter in an open manner with their supervisor. Without compromising teaching and learning quality, the supervisor should give advice and explore measures that can help students cope with pressure. The supervisor should alert the relevant programme coordinators about a student's particular situation and seek advice or assistance whenever necessary.

#### **4.4.7 Submission of written assignments**

- (a) Forms, reports, and recordings required by the agency are the property of the agency.
- (b) Seven samples of students' written work should be kept by the department.

- (c) The mid-term and final evaluation report of the fieldwork supervisor should be read and signed by the student.
- (d) With reference to the Personal Data (Privacy Ordinance), all students must observe the Guidelines to Fieldwork Supervisors and Students (Privacy and Personal Data Protection) (G09).

## 4.5 **Supervision**

### 4.5.1 **Aim of fieldwork supervision**

The aim of supervision is to develop, reinforce and strengthen students' ability to acquire adequate knowledge of personality growth and the dynamics of behaviour; establish an effective helping relationship; and enhance the constructive use of self and of resources in rendering service.

To develop their professional competence, supervision should help students balance and integrate intellectual as well as affective responses in practice. Concern for the emotional maturity of students, the development of appropriate attitudes, and the enhancement of self-awareness are all integral components of fieldwork supervision.

Social work supervision comprises three main components, i.e., the educational, administrative and supportive functions. It is important that apart from giving guidance and instruction to students, fieldwork supervisors maintain effective liaison with the agency so as to facilitate the effective integration of the student in the agency. At the same time, supervisors should oversee all aspects of the fieldwork placement including service accountability to clients. Emotional reactions (including frustration, dissatisfaction, disillusionment and value conflicts) are seen as part of students learning. Students should learn to monitor their negative emotions and prevent these from impeding their performance.

### 4.5.2 **Types of supervision**

#### (a) Individual Session

The individual supervisory session is important for the student's development as it affords them the opportunity of individual attention and personal understanding from the supervisor. This enables them to learn, receive encouragement and grow in their ability to perform their duties with good judgment and increasing independence.

Weekly sessions are recommended, with students expected to hand in their plans, recordings, and reports in advance so that both the student and supervisor can prepare for the substance of the supervision.

Guidance and support during individual supervisory sessions help students more effectively apply knowledge and skills learned in class to the actual practice situation. The supervisor aims to identify the student's level of learning and the relevant concepts taught in class so that the content of the supervision sessions can be appropriately related to the theoretical input of the relevant subjects.

A major component in individual supervisory sessions is support of the development of students' analytical thinking abilities. It is believed that a professional helping person must learn how to think analytically before effective practice is possible. Student participation in supervisory sessions is therefore vital. Supervisory sessions should not be monologues or lectures. The students should be encouraged to engage in critical thinking and to seek clarification.

In practice situations, students should be encouraged to use a variety of techniques such as reflection, confrontation, empathy and demonstrate a growing awareness of these techniques. During supervisory sessions, they should be able to explain why different behaviours and phenomena occur. The aim is to help the student become aware of differential and purposeful use of selected techniques.

(b) Group Supervisory Session

Supervisors may consider adopting a group approach in supervision. There is increasing recognition of the potential of the group as an agent of change/educational process having positive educational effects on the student.

In such instances, the reasons for using group supervision in the field should be clearly explained to the students and the value of individual participation emphasized. In order to maximize the learning potential of the group situation, adequate preparation should be made and relevant materials may be brought into the group for discussion.

Group supervisory sessions provide students with an opportunity to discuss their observations and share their experiences with their peers. They stimulate group thinking, often producing creative ideas and changing the outlook of students. They also provide opportunities for students to develop their ability in preparing and presenting a case or group material, as well as in leading discussions.

(c) Live supervision

Fieldwork supervisors are required to conduct at least one live supervision, during a student's practice. These can focus reflection more upon the mutually shared experience of practice instead of simply discussion of recalled material from recordings. The client's consent needs to be solicited beforehand. Usually, the supervisor would not intervene unless any urgent issues need to be addressed.

(d) Other forms of supervisory contact

Besides individual and group supervisory sessions, workshops on special topics may be organized so that students can benefit from a comprehensive analysis of issues of common interest. Informal contacts with students are also useful and conducive to better understanding and rapport in the supervisory relationship.

### 4.5.3 Supervisory relationship

The supervisory relationship is an important element in the teaching-learning process. A positive supervisory relationship can help modify students' attitude and reduce anxiety. Sincerity and empathy are important if students are to learn during the process of supervision.

Students will inevitably be made anxious by the demand for evaluation and self-critique. At times, the supervisory relationship may become tense and psychological support may be necessary. Sometimes, it is necessary to be more student-oriented so as to make it possible for the students to relax and adopt a more open attitude to the review and evaluation of their work.

The use of confrontation is sometimes necessary in supervision in order to get across an important point. Conflicts can be healthy and lead to further development in the learning process.

Social work students are adult learners who require a highly individualized approach. An understanding of the strengths and limitations of each individual learner helps to set realistic goals and expectations of a student's performance.

Strains within the supervisory relationship may arise for various reasons. It is important that both supervisors and students avoid interpreting such strains as mere personality clashes and avoid taking these strains personally. Should such strains exist, it is important for both student and supervisor to respect each other and wherever necessary seek clarification on differences in viewpoints so that the progress of learning is not impeded. Both parties are encouraged to approach Fieldwork Coordinator for resolution if necessary.

## 4.6 Evaluation

### 4.6.1 Purpose

Fieldwork evaluation is an objective appraisal of a student's overall functioning on the job over a specific period of time by their supervisor. It includes both evaluation of specific learning experience during placement (usually with reference to the learning contract) and assessment on performance.

Fieldwork evaluation has the following key characteristics:

- (a) It is a mutual process: the supervisor should adopt an unbiased, objective, and reasonable attitude whilst the student should uphold an open, positive and receptive attitude.
- (b) It should be an ongoing process: evaluation begins at the initial stage of the fieldwork placement and proceeds throughout the entire fieldwork placement.
- (c) It should be well substantiated: evaluation should be based on clearly specified, realistic and achievable standards and judgments substantiated with evidence. Please refer to the Mid-term Evaluation Report (F01) and Final Evaluation Report (F02) and 4.6.3 (a). The artistic aspect of social work is recognized and it is recognised that such

aspects are not always measurable. However, judgment with reference to the course content is still attainable.

- (d) It is concerned with both the quality of performance and the quality of individual accomplishments of the student.
- (e) It is an instrument that should contribute to the student's professional growth as a social worker

#### **4.6.2 Steps in carrying out fieldwork evaluation**

It should be emphasized that the following steps are for guidelines only.

- (a) From the very beginning of placement, fieldwork supervisors should help students appreciate the idea that evaluation commences at the initial stage of the fieldwork placement and that it is an ongoing process that continues throughout the whole placement.
- (b) The Mid-term Evaluation Report (F01, for concurrent placement only), Final Evaluation Report (F02) and Guidelines for Students Self Evaluation Report on Fieldwork Placement (G03) should be given to students at the initial stage of each fieldwork placement.
- (c) Students will be asked to review these forms and to see if there are any questions or areas that they would like to clarify with their supervisor during supervision.
- (d) Students should be helped to realize that every fieldwork supervisory session is, in fact, a mini-evaluation exercise. Through the exchange of ideas and discussion between the supervisor and students, the latter's performance and progress in fieldwork can be more thoroughly analyzed and assessed. Students should keep an open attitude and be ready to accept their supervisors' comments and criticisms.
- (e) A mid-term evaluation exercise should be carried out at a mutually agreed time. Students from concurrent placement are required to submit the Mid-term Evaluation Report (F01 – Part A) based on the learning contract, as well as on all or some of the items as listed in the Fieldwork Evaluation Report and Guidelines for Students Self Evaluation Report. Through the exercise, a student can develop a greater understanding of their previous performance, strengths and weaknesses. It can also serve as a reference point for a student to proceed from in order to make further progress in the latter part of the fieldwork placement. A mid-term evaluation report (F01 - Part B) may be prepared prior to the mid-term evaluation session for discussion purposes.

For summer block placement, there will be no written mid-term evaluation report but formal meetings with the agency coordinator and supervisor are recommended.

- (f) If a fieldwork supervisor finds a student's performance unsatisfactory during this mid-term evaluation exercise, an initial warning, either verbal, written, or both, should be given. Most students appreciate supervisors who help them in formulating concrete steps to reach the level of competence expected. The fieldwork supervisor should immediately alert the responsible fieldwork coordinator of any potential failure cases when they detect any breach of professional ethics or delays in submission of written assignments.



- (g) Towards the end of fieldwork placement, supervisor should remind students that an overall evaluation will be carried out at the end of the placement. The fieldwork supervisor and the student should then fix a date on which to carry out a final evaluation of the student's performance in the fieldwork placement.
- (h) Students will be asked to complete their self-evaluation reports of the fieldwork placement based on the Guidelines for Students Self Evaluation Report on Fieldwork Placement. Additional points can be added if necessary. Students should then submit the self-evaluation reports to their supervisor prior to fieldwork evaluation.
- (i) Meanwhile, it may also be necessary for a supervisor to review a student's past recordings, reports, and other relevant documentation in order to formulate a more comprehensive analysis of the performance over the entire fieldwork placement. A Fieldwork Evaluation Report will be prepared before the final evaluation meeting for discussion purposes. Supervisors are encouraged to elaborate on the student's performance by providing concrete examples to justify the assigned grades.
- (j) During the Final Evaluation Meeting, the supervisor will verbally conduct an evaluation exercise with the students based on the items listed in the Final Evaluation Report. Open discussion is encouraged.
- (k) The report should be shown to the students for review. Supervisors and students can engage in further discussion and clarification as needed. Students are expected to sign the report to acknowledge that they have read it; however, this does not necessarily imply total agreement. If necessary, students can request to attach statements to the report that address major points of disagreement.
- (l) Unless stated otherwise, the Fieldwork Evaluation Report, together with the Student's Self Evaluation Report, the Learning Contract, and samples of student's work, should normally reach APSS on or before the date specified by the Fieldwork Coordination Team. This date would always be set within a reasonable period upon official termination of the fieldwork placement.

#### **4.6.3 Fieldwork supervisor evaluation of a student fieldwork performance**

The written evaluation of a student's performance is designed to formalize what has been shared with the student by the supervisor during their weekly supervisory sessions. (Please refer to G06 and G07 for details of the Assessment Criteria in Fieldwork.)

- (a) Areas for evaluation  
There are five areas of assessment in the evaluation of student performance. A student must pass ALL FIVE areas in order to pass fieldwork. Failure in one area of evaluation will result in failure for fieldwork placement overall.
  - (1) Professional Attitudes, Values & Behaviour
    - Belief in the basic assumptions and values of social work
    - Social awareness
    - Commitment to service

- (2) Knowledge Areas
  - Knowledge of social welfare policy and services
  - Understanding of the organization
  - Understanding of the client system
  - Commitment to expand the knowledge base
- (3) Practice Competence
  - Observation and information collection
  - Assessment of needs and resources
  - Formulation of objectives and planning of intervention
  - Implementation and co-ordination of efforts
  - Termination and evaluation
  - Communication and relationship building
- (4) Integration of Theory and Practice
  - Orientation towards the integration of classroom learning
  - Understanding of theories and concepts
  - Application of theories and concepts in direct practice
- (5) Service and Learning Accountability
  - Observation of agency rules and regulations
  - Active participation and being responsible for learning
  - Timely implementation and completion of work tasks and assignments
  - Maintaining consistent and reasonable service output

(b) Failure in fieldwork

The assigning of a failing grade would be considered in fieldwork in any of the following circumstances:

- (1) Under normal circumstances, if a student demonstrates ability below the standards stated in the assessment areas
- (2) If a student manifests behaviour that seriously violates the Code of Practice stipulated by the Hong Kong Social Workers Registration Board (G01).
- (3) If a student demonstrates consistent failure to benefit from a supervisor's suggestions and teaching, and holds a hostile and resistant attitude toward learning
- (4) If a student is frequently absent from fieldwork, though allowance would be given under special circumstances (e.g., death in the family, illness)

(c) Termination of placement

With agreement between the fieldwork supervisor and the Fieldwork Coordination Team and in consultation with the placement agency, fieldwork placement would be terminated if a student performs unsatisfactorily.

(d) Grading of fieldwork performance

- (1) The grading of fieldwork adopts the University's Grade Point Average system. There are nine grades representing different levels of performance. "C" is a passing grade while below C is a failure grade. These grades are summarized in the table below:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Grade Point</u>
A+	Outstanding performance	4.3
A		4
A-		3.7
B+	Good performance	3.3
B		3
B-		2.7
C+	Satisfactory performance	2.3
C		2
*F	Poor performance (Failure)	0

The grade given is only an overall representation of the student's performance. Continuous and substantiated feedback from the supervisor during the placement as well as at the final evaluation is extremely important for the students' learning in the fieldwork placement.

For BASW Fieldwork I, II and III (APSS3793, APSS4693 and APSS4694), and MSW Fieldwork I and II (APSS5783 and APSS5784), a student must achieve at least **Grade C** for graduation with the award in order to meet the requirements for an application for registration as a Registered Social Worker (RSW) with the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) in Hong Kong.

- (2) Differential weighing is assigned to each of the five areas of assessment distributed as follows:

**For Fieldwork I (Foundation)**

Professional Attitudes & Values & Behaviours	25%
Knowledge Areas	15%
Practice Competence	30%
Integration of Theory and Practice	20%
Service and Learning Accountability	10%

**For Fieldwork II and III (Professional)**

Professional Attitudes & Values & Behaviours	25%
Knowledge Areas	15%
Practice Competence	25%
Integration of Theory and Practice	25%
Service and Learning Accountability	10%

- (3) For assessment of fieldwork, numeric marking is not required. The supervisor should assign a grade to each of the sub-areas. The overall recommended grade should be worked out in consideration of the sub-area grades and their weightings, based on the holistic impression of the supervisor. This **recommended** grade is indicative only and will be finalized by the Fieldwork Team after moderation. Clearly, the incongruity between sub-area grades and the overall grade should be avoided. The supervisor should clearly convey to the student the reasons for the grades awarded.
- (4) APSS requires written mid-term (for concurrent placement only) and final evaluation reports. Moreover, fieldwork supervisors should promptly inform the fieldwork coordinators about any instances where a student receives a failing grade or is at risk of receiving one. This will enable timely provision of additional support to the concerned individuals.
- (5) In case the student fails in fieldwork, the APSS Board of Examiners' Meeting will decide on the action to be taken. The final decision will depend on each individual student's merits/demerits.

(e) The Evaluation Report

Compiling written comments for the evaluation report is a way of elaborating on the performance of a student other than by simply assigning grades. Thus, supervisors are invited to elaborate on student's performance by providing concrete examples to justify the grades assigned for each of the five areas, together with overall comments. This gives APSS a better understanding of an individual student's level of competence and highlights their future professional development training needs. APSS also believes that an evaluation report, written in a precise and concise manner, and well-illustrated with examples drawn from the actual assignments, will help make the student better aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it is APSS policy that student reading of the written report is a subject requirement. Fieldwork supervisors should observe the date by which evaluation reports have to be submitted.

**SOFT COPY** of the final evaluation reports without identifiable data of clients and agencies can be given to students upon their request within one month of the announcement of final grades by the department. Students are required to apply for the report copy by approaching the appropriate APSS programme clerk.

(f) Students' feedback on fieldwork supervision and placement

It is both a right and responsibility of students to provide feedback on the learning opportunities available during placement and the quality of fieldwork supervision received. Feedback from students helps both supervisors and the fieldwork team to improve the quality of practice

teaching in social work education. Hence, all students are expected to complete the online Student Questionnaire on Fieldwork (F03) and forward it to the Fieldwork Coordination Team by the end of their fieldwork placement.

(g) Students' disagreement to fieldwork evaluation

In case there are any points in the final evaluation report that a student does not agree with, further discussion should be carried out between the fieldwork supervisor and the student. Should the disagreement remain unresolved, the student can add a statement explaining their reason(s) for the disagreement and submit it via the supervisor, to the Director of Fieldwork Education .

Once the mark and grade have been endorsed by a Subject Assessment Review Panels (SARP) / Board of Examiners, the formal and standard procedures for any academic appeal against a decision of the SARP / Board of Examiners, adopted by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, shall apply. Students may refer to the Student Handbook for the appeal procedure.

## 5. PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENT IN FIELDWORK

### 5.1 Travelling Allowances (for BASW only)

#### 5.1.1 Conditions of Travelling Allowances

Normally, APSS will not reimburse students for costs of travel from home to a fieldwork agency just as travelling expenses from home to The Hong Kong Polytechnic University are generally borne by students themselves. Considerations for claims for travel to the field may therefore only be granted to those BASW students with no full-time job and in situations whereby the actual cost of travel from the students' home to the agency is higher than that normally incurred from their home to the University.

#### 5.1.2 Claims Procedures

- (a) Where the circumstances of a placement qualify a BASW student for a home to office travelling claim, the student should complete a Fieldwork Travelling Application Form (Home to Office) to establish eligibility (F07) within ten days from the beginning of each placement. APSS approval should be obtained before the monthly claim form (F08) is submitted. The former needs to be submitted only once per placement while the latter throughout the placement should be made at mid-placement and at the end of the placement. All forms should also be countersigned by the Fieldwork Supervisor or Fieldwork Coordinator;
- (b) The APSS Administrative Assistant or their delegate will then inform students to collect the reimbursements at an appropriate time.

## **5.2 Project Expenses**

The provision of project expenses by APSS is to take care of situations where an agency cannot, or can only partially, pay project expenses incurred by a student in the field. The student can apply for APSS provision only when all the agency and community resources have been exhausted, and the project is indispensable for student's learning. It is normally expected that the agency should contribute to a project which is a service to the client group, besides being an opportunity for learning for the student. Thus, all contributions from non-Polytechnic University sources should first be deducted before any project expense claim is made to APSS.

The procedures for applying for and claiming project expenses from APSS are as follow:

- 5.2.1 Since APSS does not set aside a fixed amount for this purpose, it is of paramount importance that the students should initiate the discussion with the fieldwork supervisor about their intention to apply as soon as possible after commencement of the placement.
- 5.2.2 The fieldwork supervisor and students should then explore how to make good use of the agency and other possible community resources, and obtain approval from the agency staff to offer such a project.
- 5.2.3 With the assistance of the fieldwork supervisor, students should then complete the Fieldwork Placement Student Application Form for Project Expenses Subsidy (F09), which should be submitted via the Director of Fieldwork Education to the Head of APSS.
- 5.2.4 As a general guideline, the normal limit for project subsidy is \$200 per student per placement. (The amount will be under review from time to time and supervisor and students will be informed of the change.) For projects which are particularly worthwhile for student learning, students and the supervisor may submit their case if the request for subsidy is for an amount above the normal limit for special consideration of APSS. Special justifications should be included.
- 5.2.5 Students and the fieldwork supervisor will be notified of the outcome of their application by APSS.
- 5.2.6 Reimbursements are normally made after the project is completed. Claims should be itemized on the standardized form (F09), accompanied by relevant receipts countersigned by the fieldwork supervisor. The claim form, once properly completed in duplicate, should be submitted to the APSS General Office to allow timely processing and reimbursement.
- 5.2.7 The Administrative Assistant or delegate will then inform students when to collect the reimbursement.

## **5.3 Absence**

- 5.3.1 For any fieldwork placement, attendance should be 100%. Fieldwork days missed for any reason will normally need to be made up later. Absence from the field for personal reasons without prior approval of the Fieldwork Supervisor will not be accepted. In the case of illness necessitating absence from the field,

the Fieldwork Supervisor should be promptly notified. If extended leave of absence or hospitalization is anticipated, the Fieldwork Coordinator concerned should be consulted so that a prompt decision as to whether the placement might be concluded prematurely could be made. The minimum number of hours in fieldwork is stipulated in the course scheme. Any time missed must be made up at the agency, under the joint arrangement of the Fieldwork Coordinator and Supervisor.

- 5.3.2 As a general rule, APSS allows the use of overtime work to make up fieldwork days lost. However, if the number of hours lost extends over a lengthy period of time or is so sporadically spread over the placement that the continuity of services to clients as well as student learning are jeopardized, APSS may consider terminating the student placement upon consultation with the agency. Under such circumstances, whether a student is allowed to repeat the entire placement, to make up for the fieldwork time lost, or to perform any other type of remedial duty at a later day will be considered on the merits of the individual case at the APSS Board of Examiners' meeting.
- 5.3.3 All students applying for leave of absence on regularly scheduled fieldwork days must inform both the Fieldwork Supervisor and the agency verbally and in writing so that arrangements can be made to ensure that service to clients is minimally disrupted. Students should make reference to prescribed forms APSS 8 and AR 8 when applying for leave of absence. Applications occasioned by illness should be accompanied by a sick leave certificate signed officially by a qualified medical practitioner.
- 5.3.4 If a student applies to withdraw from or drop their placement, prior approval must be sought from the Director of Fieldwork Education and the Programme Leader. Justifications must be given. In undertaking professional placements, students are rendering service to the community as well as learning from direct practice, and so every effort must be made to minimize disruption to service delivery. The Supervisor should maintain close liaison with the agency to work out detailed alternative arrangements arising from any non-anticipated withdrawal.

## 5.4 **Overtime**

- 5.4.1 In fieldwork, some occasional overtime work is considered normal and should be expected and may not be credited. Any claim for occasional overtime must follow agency policies. If a student finds their fieldwork assignments are such that they result in a recurring problem, they should discuss this with their fieldwork supervisor so that a review of workload, the student's abilities and any other related issues can be made. This is particularly important since classroom and field learning are complementary. Excessive time spent on either aspect of the curriculum can upset the balance of student learning.
- 5.4.2 At times, the nature of a fieldwork assignment is such that the fieldwork might be regularly scheduled on a day other than normally designated fieldwork days. If, the fieldwork supervisor and the students judge that it is preferable or necessary for students to be in the field at weekends or on a public holiday may be counted as a substitute for the normally designated fieldwork day(s).

5.4.3 Extra fieldwork time may not be accumulated by students in order for them to leave before scheduled school holidays, to return late after school holidays or to complete fieldwork before the scheduled final day of fieldwork. Possible exceptional circumstances should be discussed with the supervisor and the agency.

## **5.5 Sexual Harassment**

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University is committed to equal opportunities in academic pursuits and employment and to eliminating any form of discrimination against all staff, students, and other persons who have dealings with the University. Sexual harassment, being a form of discrimination, is prohibited and is unacceptable at all levels in the University community. Any staff member or student who is found to have contravened the University's Policy will be subject to disciplinary action. Please refer to the University's website of Sexual Harassment Policy, (website: <https://www.polyu.edu.hk/ethicscommittee/sexual-harassment-policy/>) for a full description of the policy and practices in handling complaints concerning sexual harassment.

## **5.6 Public Liability Insurance & Group Personal Accident Insurance Claims**

The University has a public liability insurance policy which protects it against claims which may be brought by third parties in those instances in which the University may be proven legally liable. The Group Personal Accident (for students) Policy has been in place since January 1998 for the better protection of students. It covers all students who suffer accidental bodily injury or death while participating in any curricular (including fieldwork) or extracurricular activities of the University, on and off-campus, within or outside Hong Kong. Details and claiming procedure can be found in G10 to G12.

## **5.7 Arrangement in Times of Service Disruption**

The COVID-19 pandemic and other health emergencies have created new challenges to fieldwork education which may affect fieldwork arrangements due to disruption of service provision. While the fieldwork arrangements in each agency or service unit is likely to be highly context-specific and should be understood within the placement contexts, students and supervisors are advised to refer to the guideline (G13) if any agency service disruption occurs.