

SECTION 4 DIFFICULTIES IN PLACEMENT

ACTION TO BE TAKEN WHEN A STUDENT IS AT RISK OF NOT PASSING A PLACEMENT

This procedure has been developed in order to provide guidance to Practice Educators and tutors in cases where there are concerns about a student's progress on placement. The procedure provides a framework which ensures that any such concerns are properly identified and discussed with the student and the relevant procedures followed. In cases where the Professional Capabilities have not been met and the placement is recommended to have failed the procedure ensures that there is sufficient evidence to reach such a decision.

Practice Placements are a fundamental part of the social work degree and the context in which students develop their practice skills and develop the professional capabilities as required by the College of Social Work. Students are being prepared for a demanding profession where social workers practice under considerable pressure and make decisions that may have fundamental implications for the welfare of vulnerable people. It is therefore essential that the evidence gathered through observation of the student's work and assessment of their skills, knowledge and values appropriately supports the practice educator's pass or fail recommendation.

Whilst it is the student's responsibility to demonstrate her/his emerging capabilities and to make full use of the placement experience, it is also important that the student is provided with a supportive learning environment. In order to gain confidence and professionally develop their capabilities, students require supervision, encouragement and sufficient learning opportunities; a setting where they are able to ask questions, to acknowledge their vulnerabilities and test their knowledge, values and skills.

Whilst the majority of placements proceed smoothly it is inevitable that there will occasionally be concerns about a student's performance and the possibility that she/he may fail the placement. Practice educators must have the confidence and professional integrity to fail a student where a student is making insufficient progress and/or failing to adhere to professional social work values and standards. The consequences of a failed placement are however significant for the student – and indeed for the agency and the University must be satisfied that due process has been followed before a recommendation to fail a student has been made. It is not acceptable for a student to proceed through the placement when neither they nor their tutor are aware of concerns until it is too late to implement an Action Plan or where the reasons for the failure are not clear and insufficient evidence has been provided.

The procedure therefore applies where a Practice Educator has concerns that the student is not making sufficient progress and may fail the placement if remedial action is not taken. The following stages have been developed in order to provide guidance to Practice Educators, tutors and students.

Stage 1 – Practice Placement Agreement

- 1 Student commences placement
- 2 The Practice Placement Agreement is completed by the Practice Educator in conjunction with the student, and where applicable, the Practice Supervisor (see Page 18). The draft agreement is emailed to the student's personal tutor within two weeks of the placement commencing.
- 3 Practice Placement Agreement meeting takes place within the first two weeks of the placement commencing. Where there is an unavoidable delay the reasons should be recorded. The expectations of the placement should be made clear and the learning opportunities discussed and identified.

- 4 If there are early indicators and concerns at the Placement Agreement meeting, for example in relation to time keeping, attendance and/ or engagement with the induction process then these should be raised and the capabilities required of the student noted in the agreement.

Stage 2 - The Midway Review

- 1 The purpose of the Midway meeting is to review the student's progress against the Professional Capabilities Framework. Students have 70/100 days to demonstrate their capabilities and decisions on a student's ability or inability to meet these requirements should not be taken prematurely.
- 2 One week before the meeting the Mid Way Review Report (page 25) must be completed by the Practice Educator in full consultation with the student, and where appropriate the Practice Supervisor.
- 3 The Practice Educator must confirm whether the student's progress is satisfactory (page 26). If 'YES' then the draft report should **be emailed to the student's personal tutor IN ADVANCE of the meeting date**. If a student's progress is assessed as unsatisfactory (**NO**) then Section VI (Page 26) of the Recommendation should be completed in full, specifying which aspects of the Professional Capabilities Framework have not been met. The draft Midway Review Report should then be emailed to the student's personal tutor IN ADVANCE of the meeting.
- 4 The Midway Review will normally be chaired by the student's personal tutor and attended by the Practice Educator and Practice Supervisor, where applicable.
 - a) Where a student is progressing satisfactorily the Midway Review Report should be amended and finalised within 2 weeks of the meeting and signed by the Practice Educator, student, tutor and practice supervisor, where applicable (see Page 26). No further review meetings will then take place unless the practice educator advises that the student's progress has deteriorated and there is evidence to suggest that the professional capabilities are not being met.
 - b) Where a student is **NOT** progressing satisfactorily then the reasons for this must be fully discussed at the Midway Review meeting and evidence provided. The tutor may arrange to meet with the student in advance of the review meeting so that she/he has the opportunity to raise any issues or concerns. The Midway Review Report will form the basis of the discussion. Supervision notes should also be made available at the meeting along with notes from any meetings where the student's progress against the Professional Capabilities has been discussed or where specific concerns have been raised. The student will be afforded full opportunity to give her/ his response and any differences of perception between her/ him and the practice educator openly discussed and recorded. Where concerns remain at the conclusion of the discussion then an Action Plan must be discussed and completed by the Practice Educator within one week of the meeting (see Appendix 1). An Action Plan Review meeting will be held no more than four weeks after the Midway Review. This will be attended by the student, practice educator, practice supervisor and the personal tutor, who will chair the meeting. The Practice Educator will usually produce a summary of the decisions arising from the meeting, and the tutor will be responsible for recording the discussions and outcomes (see Appendix 1).

5 It should be noted that if there are concerns about the student's progress and capabilities BEFORE the Midway Review the Practice Educator, in full consultation with the student will address the areas of concern and the progress required of the student, including providing the evidence to address these, within supervision arrangements and using the agencies' internal processes. The Practice Educator may request that the Midway Review is brought forward to address the concerns and will provide evidence of supervision notes and other related records of work at the meeting.

Stage 3: Action Plan Review Meeting

- 1 The action plan will be discussed and specifically the progress made by the student in addressing the identified concern/s and in relation to the Professional Capabilities

Framework. The supervision, support and learning opportunities afforded the student will also be reviewed.

The student, Practice Educator and Practice Supervisor (where applicable) will each have opportunity to evaluate whether satisfactory progress has been made in meeting the required professional capabilities.

- 2 Where satisfactory progress has been made and evidence provided in support of it, then the Action Plan (Appendix 1, section on Action Plan Review meeting) will be completed and signed by all parties. A copy of the original action plan and the completed section on the Action Plan Review must be retained by the student, for the portfolio.
- 3 Where satisfactory progress has **NOT** been made then the areas of concern and the reasons for them will be identified by the Practice Educator and fully recorded in the Practice Educator's Evidence and Recommendation (Portfolio Item 10, Page 38). The student and the tutor will also be required to record their comments within the Practice Educator's Evidence and Recommendation. **The placement will then be formally considered to be 'at risk' and the student clearly informed of this at the meeting.** It is important to note that 'at risk' does not necessarily mean that the student has inevitably failed and continuing opportunities to demonstrate capabilities can still be afforded and the agreed actions followed through. However, where parties agree that the placement cannot be retrieved and that there is clear evidence that the student will be unable to meet the required professional capabilities a fail recommendation will be reached. In such circumstances the meeting will agree the timescale for the student's withdrawal. Where the placement continues for the full 70/ 100 days then the Practice Educator will continue to support and supervise the student and complete the final Practice Educator's Evidence and Recommendation (page 38).

Please note that if a student is making satisfactory progress at the Midway Review meeting and then subsequently deteriorates, it is anticipated that the reasons for this are first discussed with the student and remedial action agreed. Where this is unsuccessful (if the concerns more serious) then the student's personal tutor should be contacted so that a meeting can be arranged and stage 2(b) implemented.

Stage 4: Practice Assessment Panel

- 1 The student's personal tutor will notify the Practice Learning Co-coordinator of the outcome of the Action Plan Review, within 48 hours of the meeting.

- 2 It is the role then of the Practice Learning Co-ordinator to co-ordinate and chair a Practice Assessment Panel within a timely manner to avoid a delay in the process .

The Practice Educator will be required to submit the Practice Educator's Evidence and Recommendation (page 38) within 3 weeks of the placement ending, providing detailed evidence for their recommendation against the Professional Capabilities Framework.

The student will be provided the opportunity to respond to this and complete their relevant section of the Practice Educator's Evidence and Recommendation (Portfolio Item 10, Page 45). This will be within an agreed timescale, usually within two weeks, and can be supported by the tutor. The student can also submit evidence collated for their portfolio only up until the ending of the placement, and this must be verified by the Practice Educator.

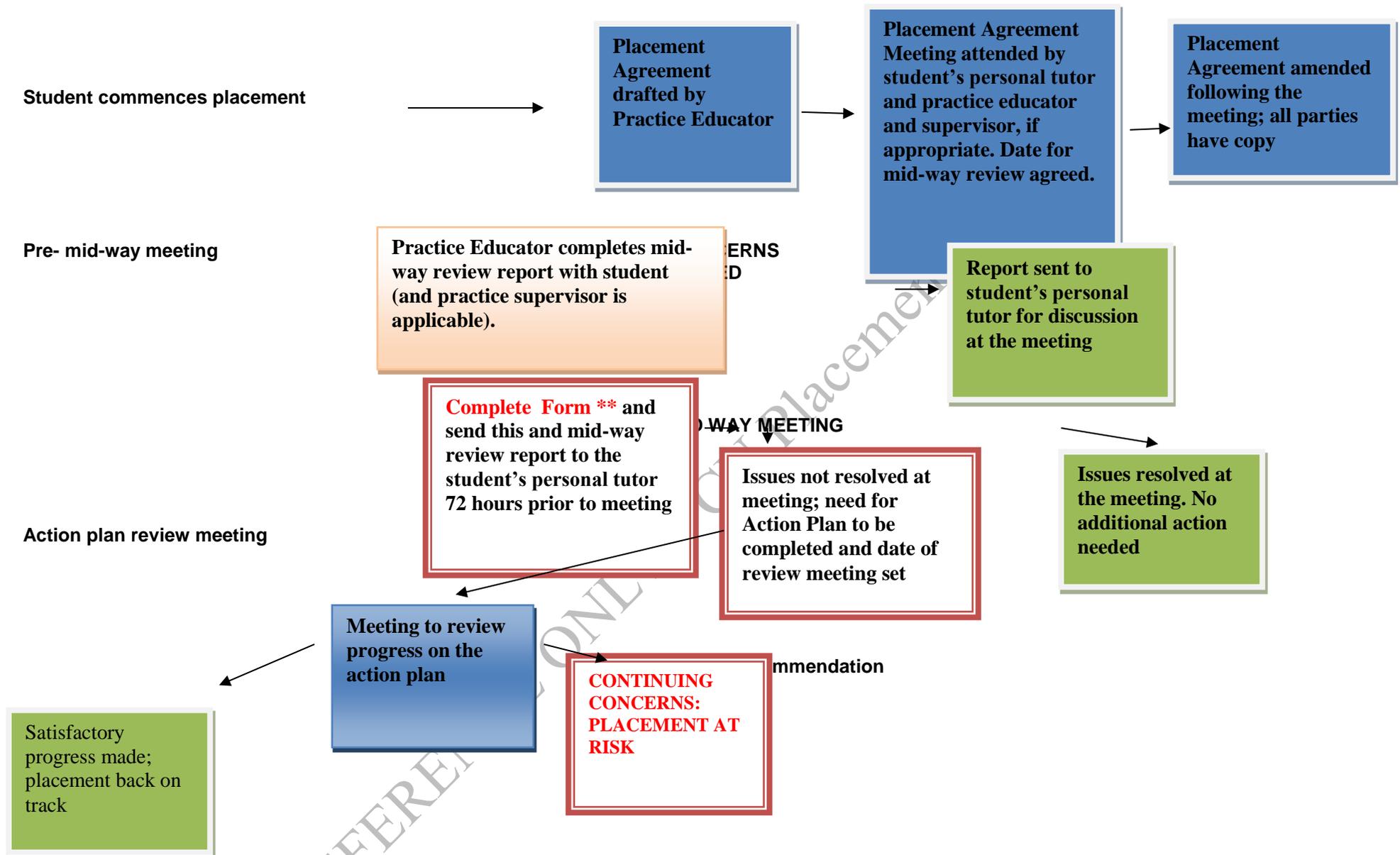
- 3 The student's personal tutor will also have the opportunity to respond to the Practice Educator's Evidence and Recommendation and complete their relevant section of the report (Portfolio Item 10, Page 45). The tutor will be invited to attend the panel. The Course Director may also be invited to attend where the student is in active dispute with the recommendation or where there is a difference of view between the Practice Educator and personal tutor.
- 4 It is the role of the Practice Assessment Panel to read all of the information available, in advance of the panel meeting. The panel may wish to see evidence of supervision notes and any other material in relation to the capabilities of the student.
- 5 The panel will then meet to fully discuss and review all of the material and consider a recommendation on the placement. This recommendation will be taken forwards by the Practice Learning Co-ordinator to the Programme Assessment Board, who will make the final decision.

It is essential to note that at Level 2/3, the Practice Placement cannot normally be retaken or re-sat.

Under only exceptional circumstances a Programme Assessment Board may permit a student to retake the Level 2/3 Practice Placement on one occasion, within one year of the original failure, at a time specified by the University and without the right to further re-sit.

- 6 Where unusually a repeat placement is recommended by the Practice Assessment Panel, the reasons for this must be clearly identified and recorded by the Practice Learning Co-ordinator.
- 7 Any opportunities for a further placement will only be afforded when the Practice Assessment Panel, Practice Learning Co-ordinator and personal tutor are satisfied that:
 - i) The reason for the student failing and/ or the placement breaking down is not attributable to actions or non-actions on the part of the student and where the tutor has provided evidence that due process has not been followed.
 - ii) Discrimination on grounds of race, skin colour, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, gender or other distinguishing feature and where such discrimination has been inadequately addressed by the agency and therefore prevented the student for working in an environment supportive of their needs. In such circumstances the tutor would be expected to provide evidence to substantiate these concerns and the actions that have been taken to address them.

REFERENCE ONLY - CU Placement Connect



Suspension of Placement

A Placement can be suspended in the following circumstances:

- Where the conduct of the student gives rise to acute concern about the practice placement continuing, for example on grounds of gross misconduct (See Appendix 11 Professional Suitability and Fitness to Practice).
- Where a student is making serious allegations, for example of sexual or racial harassment, against a member of the agency's staff or other formal complaints about the agency
- Where any conflicts of interest arise between the student and the agency – e.g. - where a student/his/her family become service users of the agency
- Where an agency complaints procedure requires suspension pending investigation.
- When an agency is responding to complaints made by service users about the student, the agency has to resolve the complaint before a decision is taken about the impact on the student. Agency procedures should take precedence and the process of investigation should be completed before a decision on the student's capabilities is taken. Where it is necessary for the agency to suspend the placement, the student's personal tutor and practice learning co-ordinator should be informed immediately.
- **Neither students, tutors nor practice educators alone can decide to end a placement, without a three-way meeting being called and the issues being considered.**
- Under exceptional circumstances such as those just described, a practice educator/ supervisor or tutor can decide to temporarily suspend a placement. This can only occur when they consider that either the student, service-users, other members of staff or the reputation of the university or agency are at risk of serious damage or danger or when they cannot make contact with the tutor or practice learning co-ordinator.
- Such a suspension will last only until the personal tutor/ practice learning co-ordinator has been informed and a 3 way meeting held as soon as possible, to make a decision about the progress of the placement, including ending of a placement, pass/fail recommendations.
 - Tutor notes of such three way meetings must be sent to the practice learning co-ordinator, who may consult with the Practice Assessment Panel members as to the way forward.
- **A student cannot decide to suspend or terminate her or his own placement.**

Suitability:

Whenever a decision is made by a practice educator that a student is at risk of failing or has failed a placement and where the evidence is unclear or disputed, a referral to the Professional Suitability Procedure will be considered (see Appendix 11).

A student may appeal against the decision of the Programme Assessment Board or the Professional Suitability Panel. The normal University Appeals Procedures apply.

REFERENCE ONLY - CU Placement Connect