

# Placement Guidelines for Students



# PRAXIS



## Introduction

### Why Placement?

All courses that are professionally endorsed by the Standards Council for Community Learning and Development in Scotland are required to contain a significant element of professional practice placement as part of the student's professional preparation.

Placement involves the provision of opportunities for students to encounter the skills, attitudes, and values present in community education professional contexts and to develop their sense of professional competence as a result.

Professional practice placements take place in a range of settings that represent the diverse scope of contemporary community education practice and help to prepare students for the multiple future roles that they may encounter post-graduation.

Placements mainly take three forms:

- full-time block placements take place over various time periods and involve the student in a immersive professional experience.
- Part-time placements can take the form of an induction process or a longer term professional experience with fewer practice hours per-week.
- Work-based placements allow students to use employment within the field of practice as a context for professional learning.

Professional practice placements are offered through a partnership between placement agencies, the University and the student themselves. The relationship between the partners should be seen as cooperative and aimed at creating a positive educational experience for the student.

Each of the partners in the placement learning experience has a unique contribution to make to the success of the learning endeavour and while the student's learning is clearly the focus of everyone's attention we would want to emphasise the symbiotic and mutual nature of the learning that occurs among all the partners.

While students learn more about themselves and their professional abilities, placement agencies learn about themselves as a context for learning and reflection and the University learns how to better enable the relationship between theory and practice.

In each of the next two sections these guidelines focus on the role of the placement agency and the student on placement. Each section is split into three periods of before during and after the placement e.g. how both agency and student might prepare themselves for the placement, how they might perform during the placement and then how they might consolidate their learning from the placement experience. The process begins with the placement agency before moving on to the student.

Finally, these are guidelines and not rules! They are intended to guide the partners in the placement process and to make suggestions about how things might be done. Every placement situation is unique and will require adaptations of the process to match the requirements of their context. Please treat these as an aide rather than a restriction and let us know what you think of them and how you have adapted them or rejected them. We look forward to hearing from you.

At the end of each section we have included a checklist of items related to the content of that section as an easy way of checking that you have covered all of the task areas outlined.



## The Student

Students often described placement as the most enjoyable and useful part of their course as they provide students with an opportunity to develop their knowledge of the practice setting while improving their skills. Placements are also an opportunity to make sense of ideas that you/they have encountered as part of your/their academic studies in the practice setting.

Students spend almost a third of their study period on supervised professional practice and as such it is a crucial part of the student experience.

While on placement it is easy for students to forget that they are students as they become immersed in the everyday realities of practice. However it is important to remember that placement is an integrated part of the student learning experience and as such should be as related as possible to their studies. The links between theory and practice are part of a complex relationship between ideas and actions; between ways of knowing and ways of being; between concepts and methodology. As part of their academic studies students encounter theories, ideas and concepts. These impact on the ways in which students make sense of the world around them, adding to their world-view and building on or undermining their previously held beliefs and prejudices. They then put themselves and their new world-view to the test in practice. It is important that this process of thoughtful practice become as explicit as possible throughout the placement period. Placement isn't the time to forget your studies it's a time to make sense of them!

## Pre-Placement

Making the most of placement begins with careful preparation and selection of the placement that is going to challenge and stretch you both creatively and practically.

### What are My Professional Learning Needs

Placement preparation begins with a period of self-reflection as you consider the experiences of practice that have brought you to this point. This may mean looking back at previous placements or volunteering or employment experiences. This process of reflection will allow you to look at the extent and type of previous experiences in order to think about the extent and limitations of the experiences you have had and what else you need to experience as you prepare for full entry to the field of professional practice.

It is often hard to make sense of the sum of all your practice experiences and how to order which experiences are more important than others. For over 20 years??? The field of community education, learning and development has been developing a structured framework of skills, attitudes, concepts and approaches which try to encompass all the factors that are required to perform and function within the field of practice. The framework is a broad set of categories which allow people to locate their experiences within practice as they develop throughout their careers. The framework is broken down into key competence areas and gives suggestions as to the kinds of skill areas that you will need to develop to become an effective practitioner. It can be helpful to use this framework to look at and order your existing practice experience in order to see where you feel you have developed particular methods and approaches and where there are still areas where you have work to do.

This audit of your experience can give you an idea of where you think you are at on the road to becoming a practitioner who feels able to face the challenges and dilemmas of practice with an increasing sense of confidence and control. Many of the educational institutions will introduce you to the the Key Competence Framework as part of your placement preparation and it may also become an important tool for measuring progress throughout your placement experience so it is worth becoming familiar with it and learning how it might be used. More on the Key Competence Framework at

[http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/the\\_competences/Competences\\_for\\_Community\\_Learning\\_and\\_Development](http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/the_competences/Competences_for_Community_Learning_and_Development)

Of course there are other frameworks for reflecting on your experiences of practice and thinking about the development of your skills and knowledge. One that can be used is the Fundamental Wheel of Human Need developed by Max Neef.

<http://www.wri-irg.org/node/23291>

People have used this framework of human need to think about how the knowledge and skills they have developed in relation to each part of the wheel.

No matter what framework you use, and you might use a mix of them, the process is the important thing in terms of getting some perspective on your development as a practitioner.

### **Which Placement Agency is Right for Me?**

The choice of placement agency is an important one and should be given some careful thought. The process of reviewing and auditing your skills and knowledge base should provide some fundamental clues as to which agency may be best suited to help in your continuing professional development. The field of CECLD is ever expanding as increasing numbers of public and voluntary agencies adopt community based engagement policies and seek our skill and knowledge base. Students will make their placement agency destination choices for lots of different reasons based on their particular needs and ambitions and it is wise for them to be as informed as possible of the opportunities and to seek advice and counsel where it is offered.

There are a range of factors that you may wish to consider as you approach your decision:

**What are my professional learning requirements?** As was stated above the first priority is your learning needs. Does the agency and the specifics of their placement offer match the kind of experience I need? Do you have lots of experience in one particular sector i.e. Youth work and want to expand your experiential profile by gaining experience in a different one or perhaps you only wish to focus on one particular sectorial context. Perhaps you have a lot of experience in working face to face with people but little background in organisational matters. Or maybe you feel you need to work in a different geographical context e.g. rural or urban. You need to think of your overall experiential base and where you want to be at the end of your period of study. What do you want to have achieved and what placement experiences will make you a more complete practitioner ready to deal with the complexities of a varied and expanding field of practice.

**What's on offer?** Your educational institution will most likely have some advice about which agencies are able to offer opportunities at the time that you need to be on placement. EIs will tend to contact all the agencies they have contact with to ask if they are able to offer placements in the coming year and they will receive a number of offers as a result. These placement offers will tend to be the ones that the EIs will consider as first options when recommending placements as they are the agencies who have considered the resource implications of hosting a placement and as a result, are most likely to be the best prepared and most enthusiastic about having a student. However, if they are not a good fit with your professional learning requirements you will need to look beyond these to other possibilities.

You may have a particular agency in mind that you think will meet your specific requirements but be aware that not all agencies are able to take students on placement for a variety of reasons. These may have to do with staffing, space, lack of qualified supervisors, timing, resources, uncertainty about the future or organisational change. If you do have a placement agency in mind that is not on the list of placement offers do a bit of arms length research and then talk to your EI tutor and work through the possibilities. If it seems to be a good option then your EI can make contact with the agency on your behalf and gauge their reaction to the prospect of hosting a placement. It is best not to approach agencies yourself in the first place as there may be factors which you are unaware of that may not allow the agency to have a placement and it is best not to raise expectations when the result may be disappointing for both parties.

### **What are my commitments?**

It can be helpful at this stage to consider and share any factors which may impact on your time and availability during the placement period. These may be pre-arranged engagements, part-time work, family responsibilities etc. Commitments like these are part of life and as such need to be factored-in when considering whether a placement is the right one for you. Most placement agencies will appreciate that there are commitments that will need to be accommodated but there may be limitations to their ability to take some factors on-board. The important thing is to be honest and up-front about your commitments at this early stage of placement arrangement and be prepared to be flexible and negotiate a way in which you can give-way in order that they feel able to reciprocate.

### **Making Initial Contact**

It may be that in discussions with your EI tutor that you identify a number of agencies that may be possible placements for you. In which case you may be asked to make contact with them to explore the possibility in a little more detail. It is important to remember to keep the conversations that you have with potential hosts on a hypothetical basis until you have visited all of them and are able to weigh-up your options. At this stage you should take your findings back to your EI tutor for discussion and advice and a decision about which one to choose. Please remember that there may be other students going through this process at the same time as you and they may be visiting the same agencies. Your EI Tutor will inform you of your placement assignment in due course.

Visiting your prospective placement agency for the first time is an important moment and one which you should prepare for meticulously. Do some pre-visit research, visit their web-site and find out the history and background to the organisation. Ask if other students have been on placement there and if it might be possible to talk to them. Look for articles and reports about the agency and look at the specifics of their placement offer. In advance of any initial meeting it is also important to prepare to present yourself as a candidate for placement in as full a way as possible. There may be particular activities planned by your EI to help you complete this preparation. It can be useful to think of this process as if you

were preparing for a job interview. Prepare your CV by bringing it up to date with your most recent experience and work on your professional learning needs so that you can talk articulately about what you hope to gain from the placement. Be prepared to answer questions like:

- Tell us what you know about our organisation?
- So tell us why you want to come to this agency for your placement?
- What particular attributes will you bring to the agency?
- What are your specific learning needs and how do you think we can help you achieve these?
- Are there any factors that we may need to take into account while you are on placement?

Remember the phrase, “first impression make lasting impressions”! Making a mark in this first encounter may go a long way to ensuring the success of your placement.

#### Pre-placement Student Checklist:

Action	✓
Carry out an audit of your professional experience using the Competence Framework and identifying where there are gaps in your practice profile.	
Meet with their academic Tutor to identify suitable professional practice placement opportunities that are attuned to their professional learning requirements	
Be clear about your outside commitments and be sure to make your tutor and potential placements aware of how these might affect your availability.	
Meet with potential placement agencies to determine compatibility negotiate and implement learning programmes with participants in the agency	
Undertake planning and preparation for the placement experience	
Undertake an Induction and work within the practice agencies conditions of employment	
All students must observe standards of behaviour and professional conduct required of them and be aware of HEI’s fitness to practise	



# During Placement

## The Induction Period

The initial period of placement is a time of introductions and **getting to know how things work** in the agency. The agency may have a programme of induction worked out for you or you may need to get on with it yourself. Either way it should be a period in which you are free from lots of structured responsibilities and able to familiarise yourself with the culture of the agency and its people.

It's often best to treat the induction period as an opportunity to **observe, shadow and listen** to people as they go about the business of the organisation. Take up a notebook and pen and become a non-participant observer, sit-in on meetings, go to group sessions, listen to what people say in conversation. Take notes and generate questions for your supervisor (see appendix 10 – Things to Observe in Groups).

Another good induction activity is to **read a range of documents** about and from the organisation. Any historical details you can pick up could be very useful as they might give clues as to the original purpose of the organisation and how that might have changed over the years. Annual Reports can provide an up to date account of the agency's purpose, activity and funding base. Policy documents will give clues to the purpose and practice of the agency. Publications might also provide insights into the organisations thinking and motivations. Again, as you read, take notes and generate questions for your supervisor.

Of course all the official documents tell us some things about the agency but they are often the official version that the agency wants the public to see. The unofficial version can be just as revealing and tell you other things about the **culture and practices of the agency**. These often lie in the ways that people relate to each other, in the way that they talk and the shorthand ways of describing things they have developed together. It can be in the informal ways that the organisation works e.g. when and where people go for coffee or which pub they gather in, when? Listen out for these informal signifiers and take note. What questions do they raise for you?

The most important element of induction is, of course **meeting people** and talking to them. Why not ask your supervisor for a list of important people to talk to. Who are the core stakeholders internal and external to the organisation? Draw-up a schedule of meetings and then think about the meetings as a research interview. Think about what you want to learn about the organisation: Its structure; its funding; its purpose; its core aims; the challenges it faces in the next three years? Then design some open questions to help structure the meetings. Take notes and think about what you've learned from the interviews. You may wish to discuss your findings with your supervisor or just use the results to generate more questions.

We can often fear that asking lots of questions might become a bit annoying to the people around you in the agency but placements often report that the questions that students ask

force them to consider hidden assumptions about their practice and can generate some conversations within the organisation about changing habitual patterns of practice.

### **Negotiating a Contract and Building a Programme of Work**

The placement contract is the agreement between the student and the host agency in relation to all the arrangements concerning the placement including: practical arrangements in relation to accommodation; supervision arrangements; administrative responsibilities; and perhaps most importantly, your programme of work which may include aims and objectives for each piece of work. The contract is a working document which can be referred to throughout the placement period and can be changed as necessary as the placement progresses and your work develops.

The design of a relevant and challenging programme of work for the placement period should be arrived at through a process of negotiation which takes into account your professional learning priorities and the requirements of the agency. The agency may have a range of legitimate tasks and projects it would like you to undertake and where possible you should build these into your work programme. Hopefully these pieces of work will form a coherent and interesting programme but if they don't match-up to your professional learning priorities you may need to look at alternatives. So, if one of your priorities is to learn more about financial aspects of project planning but this is not included in the proposals from the agency you should feel free to ask if this area of work can be included in the project plan. If not then you may need to look at other possible areas of work. Remember, the placement is essentially about your professional development and we have to hope that this can be accommodated within the projects that the agency has in mind for you. It is almost always the case that this accommodation is reached but in the case where there is a problem you need to discuss this with your supervisor and if necessary your EI tutor.

When designing a placement work programme it is tempting to cram too much in. You will be keen to impress the agency and your supervisor but try to remember that quality is more important than quantity in this case. It is your task to go deep in the projects you undertake, that is to say that you need to take time to look, talk and listen as well as perform. Think depth of learning rather than surface or superficial experience! Being a student on placement means that you need to demonstrate not just the ability to act but also think so you need to give yourself space to reflect and analyse the experiences of practice that you are engaged with. Don't try and cram in so much that you don't have any space to step back from the relentless demands of practice.

Building a good balance into your programme of work is useful in terms of building a rounded sense of what professional practice looks and feels like. Try to think of the work in a rounded or holistic fashion in which one to one work is balanced with group work, where administration and management is balanced against research and just being with people.

Getting a view of the whole job is important if you are to develop a realistic picture of all the skills and methods that are required by the professional practitioner.

Once you have agreed a contract and a programme of work with your supervisor it is useful to share this with your EI tutor so that there is an external view on the design of the contract.

## **Get Organised!**

Being professional can have lots of different interpretations and some of them might not sit very comfortably with us especially if it means creating or reinforcing unequal power relations. However one interpretation of professional we shouldn't have an issue with is the one that emphasises the need for efficiency, organisation and accountability in relation to our own self-management. It is important that we demonstrate the ability to stay on top of our work by developing plans and systems which allow us to know where we are on track and where we need to develop and adjust our aims and objectives.

### **Use a diary**

This advice might seem a little basic but if you don't currently use a diary, placement is the place to start. The basic expectations of the professional worker is that they are where they are meant to be on time. A diary is the basic tool for helping you plan your time and your commitments. It allows you to plan appointments and ensure that you don't make arrangements that clash. Being on time and in time are important signifiers of your ability to be organised and committed to the job. **On time** simply means that you arrive when you arranged to and in time means that you arrive **in time** to do all the necessary preparation that might be required. If you are responsible for organising an event you need to allow time to set-up and prepare things like changing the room setting, preparing materials, checking access and facilities and giving yourself a moment to think about what you need to do during the session.

Planning your time is a skill that develops with experience as you get to appreciate how long things take to do but at the start of your professional journey it is best to develop more detailed and structured time plans.

### **Aims and Objectives**

Each of the areas of work that you undertake on placement will need a clear set of aims and objectives in order for you to both organise your work and to give you a framework for reflection as you progress towards your goals and in the period after completion of the task.

**Aims** are clear statements about what the project or intervention is intended to achieve and **objectives** are the things that need to be achieved along the way to make that happen. If you like the aim is your intended destination and the objectives are your way-points on the journey. So you might ask yourself where you want to get to with this project and what are all the significant things that might need to be done to make it happen. Setting aims and

objectives can also help you plan your time. If the overall aim has a completion date that gives you broad timeline, then as you set objectives you can work your way back through that timeline to set times for their completion. As you set dates for the completion of tasks you can begin to see how much work is involved in each project and begin to estimate your in-put and effort. Of course these plans are estimates and you can be sure that they will need to change but as they change you can be aware of the factors that are forcing these adjustments and learn from these in the future. It is useful as part of the aims and objective setting process to think about how you will bring the placement to an end and how you want to leave things when your time is up.

If you have more than one project as part of your placement you will begin to see a dynamic complexity begin to develop as you align project aims and objectives alongside each other. As you see the timeline of your placement emerge you might note clashes of dates or times when there is too much going on at the same time or quieter periods. Building this bigger picture allows you to see how the placement might develop and where you may need to adjust your plans to make things a bit more manageable. Try to bring all the project plans together into one overall timeline and break this down into weekly plans and then get the significant dates and deadlines into your diary so that you can build reminders round them. There are lots of helpful apps to help you with reminders and to do lists so find the ones that work for you and let them help you plan your time efficiently. These time management skills are an essential part of the professional practitioners toolbox and it is important that you begin to learn how to use them during this formative stage of your professional development.

Setting project plans is important but being a student on placement requires you to think about your professional development goals as well. It can be useful to create a set of professional learning aims and objectives alongside the project aims and objectives. You can ask yourself what you aim to learn overall from your engagement with this project and then set a series of learning objectives that will help you achieve the overall goal.

## **Structured Reflection**

Setting aims and objectives for your professional development that run alongside your project plans should give you the materials to reflect on your development throughout the placement period and beyond. Making time to think about your development in the midst of the placement experience is essential for you and you must create structured space in your weekly timeline for this to happen. This space needs to be structured in order for it to be productive for you both in terms of your thinking and practice. You may wish to think of a number of structured activities that you need to complete in each reflection session which might include:

- Looking back over your reflective recordings and writing them up into a more digestible form and selecting one or two to share with your supervisor at your next meeting

- Look back over your project plans and note progress and any changes that might be required. Ask yourself - what factors have brought about changes in your plan?
- Explore links to your academic studies by asking yourself what ideas have helped you make sense of what is going on?
- Prepare everything for your next supervision meeting.
- Think about your plans for the coming period and what may need to change.

It is useful to show how productive these reflection sessions are by discussing them with your Supervisor and sharing with them the products of your reflections at supervision meetings.

### **Reflective Recordings**

Reflective recordings can take many forms and it's important to find a system that works for you. Many people keep a Journal or Notebook with them at all times during the placement and use it to note down observations and thoughts as they occur. It is easy to forget things in the midst of a busy placement and taking time to jot down a few notes in the immediate aftermath of an event or a session can help you recall how you were feeling or what questions occurred to you or what seemed significant at the time.

If you want to give your notes some structure you might want to use the 5W's of Who, What, Where, Why, When? method as an easy way of giving your notes a more systematic feel. As mentioned above, you can then look back over your notes at your reflection session and re-write them into a more considered form that you might be able to share with your Supervisor.

### **Structured Observation**

It can often be difficult to understand the significance of a situation when you are in the midst of it so it can be helpful to develop a structured form of observation that can help you be more focussed on the things you are looking for when you are in a practice setting. Below is an example of a structure used in looking at the social, political and economic life of a group.

Reflection in Practice: Things to observe in work with groups.....

#### **OBSERVABLE SOCIAL FACTORS**

- What do people say about what this group is for?
- What do they say about why they come along?
- How do people talk to each other?
- Who is not included and why?

#### **OBSERVABLE POLITICAL FACTORS**

- Who appears to be in-charge?
- What do you pick-up about the power relations in the group?

- How do they express solidarity?
- How are decisions made?

#### OBSERVABLE ECONOMIC FACTORS

- Do people pay for this?
- Are there resource issues?
- Who makes decisions about resources?
- What social classes are represented here?

This is only an example but the point is to be clear before you enter a situation what it is that you want to learn from it so that your reflections following the encounter can have some structure and definition.

#### **Using Your Academic Studies as a Source of Reflection**

Being a student practitioner requires you to hold a creative tension between these two parts. On the one hand you are a student of ideas, concepts and frameworks of understanding and on the other you are a professional practitioner in training. Finding a confluence between these roles is a process that is personal to each individual and there is no easy formula that everyone can follow. The theory/practice relationship is best described as a creative tension. As Apple argues, we don't but theory into practice in a mechanistic form. Rather, we encounter ideas and they impact the way that we think about and understand the world and in that altered state of consciousness we put ourselves into practice. In practice we test our new ideas and change our interpretation of the usefulness of them. It is a process that lasts our whole lives not just when we are students but when we are students this process of sense making is more explicit as our awareness of the process is heightened.

At the start of the placement you might want to look back at the course materials that you have studied and maybe essays or assignments you have completed and ask yourself what some of the core ideas that had some impact on you were. Write these down and refer back to them during your reflection sessions to see if they help you to analyse the experiences of practice that you have.

You may also want to consider sharing some of your academic reading with your Supervisor to give them some insight into the material you are studying. Supervisors often tell us that getting a look at course materials and resources is a welcome reminder of current academic thinking.

#### **Supervision meetings**

While personal reflection is an important discipline to develop we do our real learning in dialogue with others. In the context of placement the central dialogical relationship is

between you and your Supervisor. Supervision sessions should be the educational focal point of the placement as they provide a regular rhythm of reflection and planning.

Supervision sessions should be a regular and protected point of contact with your Supervisor which are planned and structured from the induction period forward. It is best to set a regular time and place for the meetings to take place and that nothing should change that arrangement. We all know things can get a bit hectic at times when crises occur but we strongly suggest that the times set aside for supervision be treated as sacrosanct. Should the supervision sessions become less than regular you need to let your Academic Tutor know as soon as possible.

### **Supervision meeting content**

There are many different ways of conducting a supervision session and supervisors and students will have their own ways of doing things but we want to suggest a number of elements that you may wish to include in the sessions which may prove fruitful.

**Practice Review:** The student reflects on the period since the last supervision session and highlights what they feel might be issues which they feel may require further examination. These issues are noted by the supervisor for later discussion.

Supervisors might want to consider the aims and objectives set for the student as well as the projected learning outcomes in order to track progress during the meeting.

**Reflective Recordings:** The student presents one or two of their reflective recordings and discusses them with the supervisor. Notes for action are taken.

**Sharing Reading:** Both parties discuss a piece of pre-arranged reading from either the student's studies or the supervisor's reading.

**Discussion of Issues:** Both parties discuss issues that have been raised and focus on the student's analysis of the issues and possible responses to them.

**Competences:** Students present evidence which might be used to signify having overtaken areas of competence identified at the start of the placement. Both parties discuss the student's on-going professional development.

**Planning:** Plans for the coming period are set out taking into account any issues or action points raised by any of the elements above.

### **Possible Supervision session meeting structure:**

A weekly supervision session for a full-time student should last approximately 90 minutes with other placement structures containing an equivalent time commitment.

10.00	10.20	10.40	11.00	11.30
Review of the week	Reflective Recordings	Discuss Issues	Planning next week	

Supervision sessions should be recorded as they could contain evidence of competence in a range of areas and this also gives the student important experience in recording.

The structure and content of the supervision sessions should be discussed by your supervisor during the induction period so that it is clear what your responsibilities are in terms of preparation and practice. However, there are some elements that we think should be included and you need to do some preparation to ensure the meetings are well resourced and productive.

You should select a couple of extracts from your reflective recordings in advance of the meeting so that your supervisor can have a chance to look them over in order to discuss your reflections during your meeting. You should also identify some extracts from your course reading to share with their supervisor in advance of the meeting. You should also gather evidence of competence for the meeting.

Following the supervision meeting you should take some time to digest the decisions and suggestions made during the meeting and think about how to implement these in the coming period.

### **Collecting Evidence of Competence**

The Standards Council for Community Learning and Development have developed a framework which lists the skills and aptitudes required of all CLD practitioners who aspire to practice within the broad field of CLD. The skills and aptitudes are described as competences in the Framework and fall under the following headings:

- Know and understand the community in which we work
- Build and maintain relationships with individuals and groups
- Provide learning and development opportunities in a range of contexts
- Facilitate and promote community empowerment
- Organise and manage resources
- Develop and support collaborative working
- Evaluate and inform practice



Each educational institution has its own approach to the collection and monitoring of competence evidence and we would recommend that you follow your own institutions guidance. For more information on the Competence framework visit [http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/the\\_competences/Competences\\_for\\_Community\\_Learning\\_and\\_Development](http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/the_competences/Competences_for_Community_Learning_and_Development)

### **Mid Placement Review**

Most placement processes have a mid-way review of some kind offering all the partners an opportunity to pause to reflect on the first half of the placement period and to look forward to the remaining period to come. This mid-way point may be marked by a placement visit from the placement tutor or a re-call session in the educational institution along with a mid-way report.

Reflection for this can begin with a reflection on the original aims for the placement in terms of the work programme and your professional development targets. N.B. You may be asked to complete this and other forms throughout the placement period this is good experience of dealing with this kind of task. After you have discussed the form with your supervisor you can discuss the issues raised by the form and then write it up and present it to your supervisor for editing before submitting it.

### **What If Things Start To Go Wrong?**

Most placements proceed without any real difficulties, but a few present problems for both students and supervisors. Most issues can be sorted out in the process of supervision but in a few isolated cases this proves impossible. If you are having any difficulties that you think are beyond a straightforward resolution please contact your Placement Tutor as soon as you sense that things are moving beyond a straightforward resolution in order that the educational institution can intervene in an appropriate manner. The mid-placement review provides an opportunity for problems to be raised and discussed by student, supervisor and placement tutor.

Placements can be interrupted or break-down for a range of reasons from ill-health to changes in circumstances. In these cases students will normally be offered an alternative placement experience.

### In-placement Student Checklist:

Action	✓
Engage with the agency's induction programme and learn about the agency's conditions of employment	
Participate in the negotiation of your placement contract ensuring that it meets your professional learning needs.	
Focus on your time management skills and your work planning and management methods. Be responsible for meeting the required amount of placement/practice hours.	
Set clear learning aims and objectives for your placement.	
Start a reflective journal and recordings as soon as possible and identify structured time to provide appropriate analysis of practice.	
Be prepared and participate in the regular supervisory meetings.	
Explore linkages between conceptual frameworks and approaches to practice and share perspectives from their studies with their supervisors	
Engage in individual and small group work with participants in the agency	
develop skills in planning and evaluation	
experiment with techniques of deliberation and reflection	
Draw from the range of key elements/competences and evidence practice accordingly.	

## **Concluding the Placement**

Placement by its very nature is an abbreviated experience which is almost never long enough for most students who enjoy the opportunity to test themselves and to make a real contribution to the field. Inevitably however, they must come to an end and it is essential that you make a considered and thoughtful departure from the agency with as little turbulence as possible. Thinking about how we exit a situation can often be just as important as how we enter it.

Decoupling yourself from your commitments can be a delicate process so you need to give it some thought in advance. Think about how you will conclude your work with groups and individuals, are they aware that your time is finite and bounded? How do you want to leave things? Who will carry on with your commitments? Can you bring things to a conclusion?

As mentioned earlier, it is advisable to think about these issues as part of your Aims and Objective setting at the start of the placement in order that you have a plan for your departure from the start.

### **Final Assessment Process**

Assessment isn't something that only happens at the end of the placement period, it is going on throughout the time that you are with the agency. So it's worth asking the question of yourself and others "How am I doing?" across the placement period. Of course there are formal points of assessment at the mid-point and at the end but it is useful if you are aware of your own assessment on an on-going basis.

The final assessment process is best started with about three or four supervision sessions to go to the end of the placement. This allows both you and the supervisor to look at the final assessment task and start to prepare for it. What does the formal assessment task ask you to do and what do you need to start doing to fulfil its demands. If you leave all this to the last week there may not be time to complete all the things that are needed and this often results in a delay in the final assessment.

The same applies to any associated academic tasks that you may have to complete. It is best to start preparing for these before the end of the placement in case there are any activities that demand that you engage with the agency itself.

### **What have You Learned From the Placement?**

The formal assessment tasks are about meeting the demands of your supervisor and the EI but it is also worth carrying out your own assessment of the experience in terms of the core learning points for you. What have you learned about your strength? What areas do you still need to develop? What type of placement may be best for you next time? What can you add to your CV following the placement? What do you need to do to maximise your employability?

### Post-Placement Student Checklist:

<b>Action</b>	√
Prepare for final assessment process in the weeks prior to the end of placement.	
Complete any academic tasks that are required.	
Completed all sections of the competence framework evidence portfolio.	
Prepare for final placement presentation (where required).	
Work with Supervisor to complete and return the Final Report with Pass/Fail grade and comments to the Placement Unit.	
Consider issues of on-going professional development and discuss with your supervisor.	
Prepare for the placement review.	
Prepare and submit placement related academic assessment.	