

Key considerations for tertiary students doing placement in schools and early childhood centres

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There are a number of key considerations related to education industry placement (practicums) that take into account essential Australian guidelines and common expectations including issues such as - legal, safety and compliance; duty of care; child safety; professional conduct; ethics; relationships; communication; relating theory and practice; classroom management; feedback, assessment and evaluation; diversity and equity; and professionalism.

Legal, safety and compliance requirements

Before starting placement, student teachers must meet *strict requirements* related to child safety and professional suitability including -

- Working with Children Check (WWCC) and/or police/background checks
- Child protection and mandatory reporting training
- Compliance with health, safety, and “fitness to practice” requirements
- Completion of required documentation and higher education provider approvals

In schools, students are also part of the system’s duty of care - meaning they must take reasonable steps to keep children safe and minimise harm.

Duty of care and child safety

Child safety is the top priority in all placements, so -

- Always supervise children appropriately
- Follow risk management and safety procedures
- Be alert to signs of harm or abuse and follow reporting policies
- Ensure the learning environment is safe and inclusive

Duty of care applies to *all* staff and student teachers and includes taking steps to prevent both physical and psychological harm.

Professional conduct and ethics

Professionalism is fundamental during placement and this is demonstrated in the following ways -

- Maintain confidentiality of children and families
- Build respectful relationships with children, families and staff
- Follow centre/school policies and procedures
- Demonstrate ethical behaviour and professional boundaries
- Be punctual, reliable, and prepared

Student teachers are expected to behave as emerging professionals, not just learners.

Relationships and communication

Strong relationships are essential for a successful placement, therefore -

- Work closely with your mentor/supervising teacher
- Collaborate with educators and staff
- Communicate professionally with families
- Build positive, respectful relationships with children

Placements emphasise developing effective relationships with both children and colleagues.

Applying theory to practice

Placements are designed to bridge higher education (tertiary) learning with real-world teaching -

- Apply theoretical knowledge to teaching practices
- Observe experienced educators and reflect on practice
- Plan and implement learning experiences
- Adapt teaching to meet diverse learners' needs

Practicum experiences allow students to integrate theory with real classroom practice.

Teaching skills and classroom management

Developing teaching competence is a major focus and this can be achieved through -

- Planning 'engaging' and developmentally appropriate lessons
- Use effective classroom management strategies
- Establish routines and expectations
- Build positive teacher - student relationships

Effective classroom management supports student learning, engagement, and a safe environment.

Reflection, feedback and assessment

Student teachers are expected to continuously improve and this can be facilitated in the following ways -

- Reflect on teaching experiences
- Accept and act on feedback from mentors
- Set professional goals
- Complete required assessment tasks and documentation

Reflection helps identify strengths and areas for improvement during placement.

Understanding the educational setting

Student teachers must learn how the setting operates, so -

- Follow curriculum frameworks (e.g., EYLF, Australian Curriculum)
- Understand policies (behaviour, inclusion, safety, and the like)
- Learn about children's backgrounds, needs and diversity
- Participate in the broader school/centre community

This includes understanding the role of the teacher within the wider education community.

Inclusion, diversity and cultural responsiveness

Student teachers must respect and support diversity, therefore -

- Be inclusive of different cultures, languages, and abilities
- Adapt teaching to support equity and participation
- Show respect for family values and backgrounds

Professional expectations and accountability

To successfully complete placement, student teachers must -

- Meet attendance requirements
- Demonstrate competency against professional standards
- Pass evaluations from supervising teachers
- Complete all placement-related assessments

Placement is a mandatory, assessed component of most (if not all) teaching and early childhood qualifications.

*The key considerations can be grouped into five core areas - **Safety & legal compliance** (WWCC, duty of care, child protection); **Professionalism & ethics** (conduct, boundaries, confidentiality); **Teaching practice** (planning, delivery, classroom management); **Relationships & communication** (with children, families, staff) and **Reflection & development** (feedback, improvement, assessment).*

Also worth reading –

Australian Professional Experience Guidelines (2024) - [Australian Professional Experience Guidelines](#)

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