

CISVic Student Unit Model

Navigating the Learning Plan & Placement Tasks



Student Placement: Adult learning principles

Field placement and field education is based on adult learning principles, therefore, whilst on placements students are encouraged to be:

- (i) involved in the organisation and negotiation of placements
- (ii) responsible for negotiating their own learning experiences
- (iii) responsible for contributing to assessment in field education
- (iv) engaged in placement development, through providing feedback on existing placements and through contributing suggestions for new placements.

Task supervisors work with students to allocate tasks around key learning areas. The table below provides a menu of suggested tasks against the learning areas relevant to task supervisors under the CISVic Student Unit Model¹. When allocating tasks, ask yourself the questions:-

- (i) are these discrete tasks? If not, how can I break them down to discrete tasks?
- (ii) are there outcomes I can measure against these tasks?
- (iii) what are some of the 'things' that I could refer to demonstrate competencies against these tasks?

Ultimately, placements are opportunities to develop practitioners who are:

- Self-responsible and resourceful;
- Innovative;
- Effective negotiators and advocates;
- Personally and professionally powerful in such a way that they empower people in their lives, social organisations and communities; and
- Ethical in their use of power, knowledge and skills.

In relation to casework, placements provide opportunities for students to test drive:-

Approaches to practice based on critical theory, which acknowledge that we live and work in a fundamentally unjust world and that individual problems are significantly influenced by social structures. These approaches recognise the potential for individual response and change (rather than accommodation to oppressive social situations), and also the need for social change. In ER casework, caseworkers:-

- ➔ work with clients to build personal capacity through supportive engagement, systems knowledge and navigation;
- ➔ empower clients by providing information, resources and options to deal with their current crisis;
- ➔ engage with networks, professionals and advocacy campaigns to effect systemic change

Working collaboratively with clients, other workers and volunteers in their everyday interaction and engagement.

Self-responsibility so that students integrate their own theoretical and practical experiences into their personal, critically reflective practice or action. Students can be encouraged to be active participants in all aspects placement, such as agency visits, client work, observing volunteers in ER assessments, attending network meetings.

Developing negotiation and advocacy skills in advocating on behalf of clients with utilities and other service providers. Some tasks around this skill-set could also involve projects such as referral protocols with other service providers.

Developing common bases for agreement and action in client work. As caseworkers, students learn to develop an agreed action plan with clients as part of capacity building and problem solving. These activities offer an experience of joint planning and conscious thoughtful practice, based on mutual agreement.

¹ See the CISVic Student Unit Model accessible at <http://www.cisvic.org.au/student-placement/resources--links>

Adult Learning Theory

The following is taken from <http://www.qotfc.edu.au/resource/index.html?page=65335&pid=65375> , a site dedicated to occupational therapy practitioners' The Clinical Educator's Resource Kit. The full resource kit can be accessed at <http://www.qotfc.edu.au/resource/index.html>

Part of being an effective educator involves understanding how adults learn best (Lieb,1991). Andragogy (adult learning) is a theory that holds a set of assumptions about how adults learn. Andragogy emphasises the value of the process of learning. It uses approaches to learning that are **problem-based and collaborative** rather than didactic, and also emphasises more **equality between the teacher and learner**.

Andragogy as a study of adult learning originated in Europe in 1950's and was then pioneered as a theory and model of adult learning from the 1970's by Malcolm Knowles an American practitioner and theorist of adult education, who defined andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Zmeyov 1998; Fidishun 2000).

What do you mean by 'adult learning principles'?

Knowles identified the six principles of adult learning outlined below.

- Adults are internally motivated and self-directed
- Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences
- Adults are goal oriented
- Adults are relevancy oriented
- Adults are practical
- Adult learners like to be respected

How can I use adult learning principles to facilitate student learning on placement?

Good question!! Here we will discuss some ways to facilitate learning by applying Knowles' Adult Learning Principles:

1. Adults are internally motivated and self-directed

Adult learners resist learning when they feel others are imposing information, ideas or actions on them (Fidishun, 2000).

Your role is to facilitate a students' movement toward more self-directed and responsible learning as well as to foster the student's internal motivation to learn.

As clinical educator you can :

- Set up a *graded learning program* that moves from more to less structure, from less to more responsibility and from more to less direct supervision, at an appropriate pace that is challenging yet not overloading for the student.
- *Develop rapport* with the student to optimise your approachability and encourage asking of questions and exploration of concepts.
- *Show interest* in the student's thoughts and opinions. Actively and carefully listen to any questions asked.
- *Lead the student toward inquiry* before supplying them with too many facts.
- Provide *regular constructive and specific feedback* (both positive and negative),
- *Review goals and acknowledge goal completion*
- *Encourage use of resources* such as library, journals, internet and other department resources.
- *Set projects or tasks* for the student that *reflect their interests* and which they must complete and "tick off" over the course of the placement. For example: to provide an in-service on topic of choice; to present a case-study based on one of their clients; to design a client educational handout; or to lead a client group activity session.
- *Acknowledge the preferred learning style* of the student. A questionnaire is provided below that will assist your student to identify their preferred learning style and to discuss this with you.

2. Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences

- Adults like to be given opportunity to use their existing foundation of knowledge and experience gained from life experience, and apply it to their new learning experiences. As a clinical educator you can:
- *Find out about your student* - their interests and past experiences (personal, work and study related)
- *Assist them to draw on those experiences* when problem-solving, reflecting and applying clinical reasoning processes.
- *Facilitate reflective learning opportunities* which Fidishun (2000) suggests can also assist the student to examine existing biases or habits based on life experiences and "move them toward a new understanding of information presented" (p4).

3. Adults are goal oriented

Adult students become ready to learn when "they experience a need to learn it in order to cope more satisfyingly with real-life tasks or problems" (Knowles, 1980 p 44, as cited in Fidishun, 2000). Your role is to facilitate a student's readiness for problem-based learning and increase the student's awareness of the need for the knowledge or skill presented. As educator, you can:

- *Provide meaningful learning experiences* that are clearly linked to personal, client and fieldwork goals as well as assessment and future life goals.
- *Provide real case-studies* (through client contact and reporting) as a basis from which to learn about the theory, casework methods, functional issues implications of relevance.
- *Ask questions* that motivate reflection, inquiry and further research.

4. Adults are relevancy oriented

Adult learners want to know the relevance of what they are learning to what they want to achieve. One way to help students to see the value of their observations and practical experiences throughout their placement, is to:

- *Ask the student to do some reflection* on for example, what they expect to learn prior to the experience, on what they learnt after the experience, and how they might apply what they learnt in the future, or how it will help them to meet their learning goals.
- *Provide some choice* of fieldwork project by providing two or more options, so that learning is more likely to reflect the student's interests.

"Students really benefit from regular 'teaching sessions' - time spent going through assessments such as how to do a kitchen assessment, and having in-services presented on specific topics - such as Cognition or Perception. I find they understand more about a topic when it is directly relevant to the work context. This is invaluable as it ties theory to practice." S. Bartholomai, OT clinical educator, Ipswich Hospital (personal communication, May 31, 2007)

5. Adults are practical

Through practical fieldwork experiences, interacting with real clients and their real life situations, students move from classroom and textbook mode to hands-on problem solving where they can recognise first-hand how what they are learning applies to life and the work context. As a clinical educator you can:

- *Clearly explain your reasoning* when making choices about assessments, interventions and when prioritising client's clinical needs.
- *Be explicit* about how what the student is learning is useful and applicable to the job and client group you are working with.
- *Promote active participation* by allowing students to try things rather than observe. Provide plenty of practice opportunity in assessment, interviewing, and intervention processes with ample repetition in order to promote development of skill, confidence and competence.

6. Adult learners like to be respected

Respect can be demonstrated to your student by:

- *Taking interest*
- *Acknowledging the wealth of experiences* that the student brings to the placement;
- *Regarding them as a colleague* who is equal in life experience
- *Encouraging expression* of ideas, reasoning and feedback at every opportunity.

It is important to keep in mind that the student is still developing practice skills. However, with the theory and principles of adult learning in mind, you can facilitate the learning approach of the student to move from novice to more sophisticated learning methods. This facilitates greater integration of knowledge, information and experience; the student learns to distinguish what is important when assessing and working with clients; how to prioritise client needs, goals and caseload; when rules can be put aside and how/when the approach to occupational therapy practice and professional communication emerges from strict modelling of behaviour into a unique therapeutic and professional expression of self. (Fidishun, 2000; Lieb, 1991)

Learning Plan

Under the CISVic model, task supervisors have responsibility for allocating tasks for the following learning areas, and assess students competencies at mid-placement and at the end of the placement.

Learning Area	Learning Objectives	Examples of tasks & method of assessment
Learning Area 2	<p>Organisational context: <i>An understanding of the organisational, legal and political contexts of human services processes.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eco-map of the agency & its context • Attend and report on ER or other network meetings • Set up resources folder of relevant referral agencies • Identify and list key organisational procedures/documentation related to risk management • Undertake an analysis of 'client feedback' systems such as evaluation/feedback forms, termination of interviews for reporting or review purposes
Learning Area 4	<p>Processes, skills and relationships: <i>An ability to form constructive relationships with individuals, groups and communities including user groups, colleagues, professionals and people in other significant roles / positions.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case presentation to volunteers or supervisor • Complete and submit agency referral documentation • Observe an interview with a client, and identify processes and key agency policies in relation to ER and other services • Record minutes at team meeting • Write clear, comprehensible case notes • Keep a diary of key events and tasks undertaken • Actively participate in the work setting and agency team (team meetings, presenting information, propose agenda items) • Demonstrate caseworker skills as outlined above: capacity building; working collaboratively; negotiation and advocacy; engaging in systemic change
Learning Area 6	<p>Research: <i>Recognition of research as an integral part of social work practice; demonstrating knowledge and understanding of all types and stages of social research.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present information on a relevant practice topic at an in-service to staff • Locate literature relevant to a practice problem • Designing or analysing client feedback surveys • Identify and summarise current literature relating to placement (client groups, problem foci, intervention methods) • Develop a proposal for research or evaluation project, documenting parameters, hypotheses, questions, outcome measures and tools • Draft three potential research questions that are relevant to this agency and/or client group • Identify funding sources and/or apply for research/evaluation funding based on proposals outlined above
Learning Area 7	<p>Social policy: <i>An understanding of the legislative and social policies which influence the different fields of practice including knowledge of relevant legislative and policy frameworks.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend and report on caseworkers network meetings • Attend and report on CISVic and/or ER regional network meetings • Maintain your agency's social media or website • Complete organisational analysis noting social policy related aspects • In conjunction with agency manager, draft the organisation's advocacy framework for the next 12 months • Provide a written summary of current social & professional issues in ER • Identify and list legislation relevant to the community welfare sector, casework in ER and ER in general • Undertake and write-up a policy analysis on an issue related to ER or information support sectors.