
Social Work Placements

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) refers to the formal acknowledgement of professional work experience for credit purposes.

Master of Social Work (MSW-GE) and Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students who are approaching their first social work placement can apply for credit, based on recognition of prior learning (RPL), for the first of the field education topics (SOAD3102 or SOAD9107).

The requirements for RPL are set by the [Australian Association of Social Workers](#) (AASW) and outlined in their [education and accreditation standards](#).

Eligibility criteria

Eligibility to apply for RPL is based on both currency and relevance of formal work experience, as follows:

Currency - you must have worked in a health or welfare setting for a minimum of three (3) full-time equivalent years', of which at least one (1) year is within the last three (3) years (i.e. of date of application).

Relevance - you must demonstrate a workload similar to tasks carried out by social workers including direct practice in assessment and risk assessment, counselling, case work and case management and community work. You will be asked to provide copies of the relevant job and position specification/s for this purpose.

Please note:

The granting of RPL for a field education topic is considered very carefully; it is not automatic. If you are interested in applying, it is really important that you continue to engage in the placement planning process (for your first placement) throughout stages one and two of the application process. This will ensure that, if your application is unsuccessful, you are able to progress into your first social work placement.

Applying for RPL

Students seeking RPL need to provide evidence that they have a sufficient basis of prior knowledge and skills, consistent with the learning outcomes for the first field education topic (SOAD3102 or SOAD9107).

The process of applying for RPL involves two stages. Stage One is the first step and focuses on *eligibility*; this is to determine whether you are eligible to proceed with a full RPL application (Stage Two).

Stages 1 and 2 applications should be submitted electronically via the [Ask Flinders](#) portal by clicking on the 'Request Support' tab/link (or by email: askflinders@flinders.edu.au). You will be contacted by email if further clarification or information is required.

STAGE ONE

A Stage One application consists of:

- a *cover letter* (max. 1 page) that includes your name, student ID number, and relevant (field education) topic code, and provides a summary of your eligibility for RPL regarding both currency and relevance of work experience (see Eligibility criteria);
- electronic copies of official job or *position descriptions* concerning the work experience/s relevant to your application; and
- a current *curriculum vitae* that covers the time period relevant to your application (i.e. at least 1 year within the last three 3 years, from date of application) and provides information including job title, employing organisation, dates employed (by month/year), and basis of employment (full or part time and time fraction), for each position held.

Stage One applications must be submitted **no later than week 5** (Friday, C.O.B.) of the semester that precedes the relevant field topic.

This means that RPL applications in relation to a field education topic in semester 1 must be submitted by week 5 of semester 2 in the preceding year, or for a field education topic in semester 2, by week 5 of the preceding semester (semester 1).

Please retain copies of electronic documents as you will be required to submit these again if you proceed to a Stage Two application.

Outcome of Stage 1 application

You will be advised of the outcome of your application within 2 weeks of the date of submission.

- If it is determined that you are eligible for RPL, you will be invited to proceed to Stage Two of the application process.
- A determination that you are NOT eligible will conclude the application process.

STAGE TWO

Eligible students will be invited to proceed to Stage Two and submit a full RPL application, consisting of -

- A *revised cover letter* (max. 1 page) that includes your name, student ID number, and relevant (field) topic code and provides a summary of your case for RPL;
- A current *curriculum vitae* covering the time period relevant to your application (as for Stage One); and
- A *portfolio of evidence* that includes:
 - o Electronic copies of official job or position descriptions concerning the work experience/s relevant to your application;
 - o Two referee reports written by professionals who have direct knowledge of your practice experience, at least one of whom must be a qualified social worker (eligible for AASW accreditation);
Please note that current colleagues, people who report to you, friends, and/or family members are not appropriate referees for this purpose.
 - o A personal skills audit of your work experience that demonstrates how your knowledge, skills and professional insights align with the AASW Practice Standards and Profession-Specific Graduate Attributes (refer to Evidence Guide) and is
 - consistent with the level expected of a student at the end of their first placement; and
 - demonstrates your ability to integrate theory and practice, social work ethics and values.

Stage Two applications must be submitted **within 4 weeks** of the date of the invitation to apply and/or no later than **week 10** (Friday, COB) of the semester preceding the relevant field topic.

This means that RPL applications in relation to a field education topic in semester 1 must be submitted by week 10 of semester 2 in the preceding year, or for a field education topic in semester 2, by week 10 of the preceding semester (semester 1).

Process of assessment

Applications will be assessed by a panel made up of Field Education Liaison staff and at least one other person who is a qualified social work practitioner and/or member of the social work teaching program. In considering your application, the panel may ask you to provide further information or evidence to enable a determination to be reached.

You will be advised of the outcome of your application within 4 weeks of the date of submission.

- A determination that your application does not demonstrate the required standards will conclude the process and no credit will be granted. RPL applications cannot be resubmitted.

Subsequent placement for students granted RPL

The Australian Association of Social Workers requires, where a student has been granted RPL (credit) for their first placement, that their next (final) placement must:

- be undertaken in an Australian setting, in a human services agency that employs social workers, where the student is engaged in direct practice as part of a professional group; and
- have a primary focus on direct practice; and
- be in a setting that is different to the student's work history and experience (i.e. upon which the approved RPL was based); and
- be supervised by an on-site social worker (i.e. a Field Educator employed in the placement setting), not an External Field Educator.