



Placement Information

In the Practicum component of the MPsych (Clin) program at UNE, students undertake three placements; one in the first year of training and two in the second year. One placement is at the UNE Psychology Clinic and two placements at external locations. Students undergo mandatory criminal record and child safety checks, and required vaccinations, prior to placement.

Prior to undertaking placements, students receive intensive training in psychological assessment, intervention, professional issues and counselling skills. Most students also undertake an intensively-supervised placement in the UNE Psychology Clinic before being sent out to external placements. Many students have already had prior experience as professional psychologists. This means that students on placement have an established level of professional skills and can provide valuable input into the service settings in which they are accepted.

Students can undertake placements in a range of settings including adult, child/family, community and acute services. Supervision from a Clinical Psychologist is required, although non-Clinical supervision can also occur with back-up supervision from the UNE (or elsewhere). Supervision normally occurs at a rate of 1-1½ hours per placement day. Prior to accepting any student on placement, an interview between the student and potential supervisor is arranged as an opportunity for the placement site to determine whether the student will be suitable to their needs.

Outline of Placement Requirements

Placements are selected in order to provide each student with experience and skill development in a range of settings. In total, the three placements need to fulfil the minimum requirement of the following targets:

- At least 1000 hours of supervised practical placement experience.
- At least 400 hours of the 1000 hours total to comprise face-to-face client contact time.
- At least 180 hours of the 1000 hours to comprise supervision.

These hours are usually divided between the three placements in approximately the following manner:

	<u>Client Contact</u>	<u>Supervision</u>	<u>Total hours</u>
<i>UNE Psych Clinic:</i>	100	80	300
<i>Other placement A:</i>	150	50	350
<i>Other placement B:</i>	150	50	350
<i>Total:</i>	<u>400</u>	<u>180</u>	<u>1000</u>

Placements are usually completed at a rate of 2, 3 or 4 days/week, to be negotiated between the student and the field supervisor. At a rate of 7.5 hours/day, the above hours equate approximately to

40 days in the UNE Psychology Clinic Placement, and 47 days in each of the other placements – equating to 4-5 months in total at approx. 3 days/week. An aim in the UNE Psychology Clinic placement is to provide thorough supervision, totalling 80 hours for the placement, in the form of both individual and group supervision.

When on placement, students are expected to behave at all times in a professional and ethical manner, in accordance with the Australian Psychological Society (APS) Code of Ethics (2007) and NSW Psychologists Registration Board Code of Professional Conduct (2004).

Supervision

Supervisor qualifications

Supervision of all placements is to involve at least one hour of direct contact between supervisor and supervisee for each day (7.5 hours) of placement. Supervision can occur in both individual (one-on-one) format and also group format. However, at least 50% of supervision is to occur in individual format.

Direct supervision contact may include communication by telephone or video conference, but such forms of supervision must not exceed 30% of the total supervision hours on any one placement (and must satisfy APS College Approval Guidelines for distance supervision).

Supervision may vary from direct supervision of the student undertaking activities to more advanced discussion of activities and cases. The form of supervision may change over time as the student gains more experience and expertise.

Supervisor obligations on placement

Field Supervisors are required to oversee all activities of interns on placement. This includes close monitoring and countersigning of all written material. Note that APAC General Accreditation Standard 5.1.19/5.3.23 (2009) states that “All reports and case notes written by the student arising from training undertaken as part of any internal or external placement must bear the signature of the responsible supervisor”. This means that not only reports and letters must be countersigned by the supervisor, but also day-to-day case (progress) notes.

Field Supervisors are also requested to utilise the “Supervisor Comments” section of the log book. While obviously every activity will not require comment, the supervisor comments column can provide a valuable record of student progress. Consistent documentation in this area is also likely to enable timely recognition and rectification of any problems that might arise during the placement. Regular Field Supervisor comments made in relation to areas covered by the initial contract, mid-placement review and final placement review can provide continuous monitoring of these key areas.

Placement Hours

Client contact hours

At least 40% of total practicum hours is to occur in the form of direct client contact. Direct contact involves assessment, therapy, and contacts with other relevant informants (e.g., teachers). Direct client contact can occur in individual or group contexts. In rural settings, up to 100 of these 400 contact hours can be via tele/videolink. Time spent in supervision and case conferences or presentations is **not** to be considered direct client contact.

Other placement hours

Other placement activities may include record-keeping, attendance at meetings, case presentations, research on client problems, and familiarisation with relevant aspects of the placement organisation/site.

Other issues regarding placement hours

While some variation in hours achieved at each placement site may occur, there is no provision for purposely undertaking extra hours at any one placement with the express purpose of reducing necessary hours at subsequent placements. Each placement has its own target hours irrespective of whether greater hours might have been achieved on previous placements.

It needs to be borne in mind that these are *minimum* requirements. Furthermore, achievement of target goals re hours in any one placement would not necessarily take precedence over other concerns, such as appropriate finalisation of assessment/treatment for an individual client or outstanding supervision matters, as being the criterion upon which the decision to finalise a placement is made.

Log Book

APAC (2009) specifies that “On commencing the 5th year, every postgraduate professional coursework student must commence a single log book of casework and supervision experiences. The log book must detail the nature and hours of all placement and other practica undertaken (internal and external), as well as the dates, nature and hours of supervision, with group supervision clearly differentiated from individual (i.e. one-on-one) supervision and the log book clearly specifying the nature of client work undertaken. Supervisors are required to regularly endorse, by signed notation, that the log book is a true reflection of the practica undertaken The log book should be carried over into the 6th and subsequent years of professional postgraduate training ... A final check of the log book must be a requirement of the course and this check must be confirmed by the signature of the/a primary supervisor on the log book itself” (5.1.17).

The log book should provide a rich source of information both of (i) activities undertaken in client contact and supervision and (ii) student progress. The responsibility for maintaining an ongoing record of details of client contact and supervision falls with the student. Details to be provided by students include activities undertaken/areas covered in supervision; client characteristics, issues and diagnoses; context of client contact; assessment or intervention procedures; contact with carers/school teachers etc. Supervisors are encouraged to note relevant issues re student progress over time in the “supervisor comments” column.

Copies of updated pages of the log book should be regularly provided by the student to the UNE placement coordinator on a monthly basis. This provides the placement coordinator with regular and ongoing information re progression of the placement – in addition to the three “formal” documents of initial contract, mid-placement review and end-of-placement review. Furthermore, communication from either student or Field Supervisor by email or telephone is encouraged throughout the placement should any problems/issues arise that are not resolved between Field Supervisor and student.

Organisation and review of placements

It is a central aim of the UNE Master of Psychology (Clinical) program to foster ongoing liaison and communication between field supervisors and UNE Clinical program staff. This process should occur from pre-placement through to end-of-placement evaluation. Pre-placement, UNE placement coordinator is to discuss relevant aspects of the prospective placement both with the field supervisor and student (and will require CV of Field Supervisor and also description of placement). A pre-placement interview between field supervisor and student is then arranged, to ascertain suitability of the student for the placement and clarify any other issues.

A Supervision Contract is completed and signed by the field supervisor and student at the beginning of each placement. This document states the objectives for the placement including the range of activities to be covered and the skill base to be developed. The contract is reviewed, approved and signed by the placement coordinator (APAC 2009, 5.1.23).

At approximately the mid-way point of the placement, an interim review is conducted in which student and field supervisor review progress in terms of student performance and the extent to which placement objectives are being met. A copy of this review is to be provide to the UNE placement coordinator, and any necessary actions carried out. Where possible, the UNE placement coordinator or another staff member will attempt to attend mid-placement reviews either in person or via telephone.

At the end of placement a final assessment is conducted as to whether the placement has been completed to a suitable standard, whether further time is required to meet requirements, or whether the student has failed to meet requirements and us unlikely to do so with further work. Again, where possible, the UNE placement coordinator or another staff member will attempt to attend mid-placement reviews either in person or via telephone.

References

Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) (2009). *Rules for Accreditation and Accreditation Standards for Psychology Courses*. Available at <http://www.apac.psychology.org.au/Content.aspx?ID=1083>

Australian Psychological Society College of Clinical Psychologists (2006). *Course Approval Guidelines*.

*Thank you to all Field Supervisors for your support of the
UNE Master of Psychology (Clinical) program*