

Department of Applied Social Sciences

Master of Social Work

FIELDWORK MANUAL

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THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES

Social Work
Fieldwork Manual

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(Updated on Sept 2025)

1. PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL

This manual details fieldwork policies and procedures of fieldwork for the Social Work Programmes. As practice teaching in fieldwork involves a large number of fieldwork supervisors, both faculty- and agency-based, together with the collaborative efforts of social welfare agencies, it is essential to clearly outline operational guidelines in the fieldwork process. It is intended for the use of fieldwork supervisors, faculty members and the Fieldwork Coordination Team of the Department of Applied Social Sciences (the Department) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU).

This manual should be used with the flexibility it allows. Users are urged to give due recognition to the special characteristics of placement units, the teaching styles of individual supervisors, and the learning needs and styles of individual students. In addition, it should be read and followed with close reference to the programme scheme of the Social Work programmes.

2. FIELDWORK IN THE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMMES

2.1 Master of Social Work (MSW)

2.1.1 The Programme

Objectives

The MSW Programme aims to develop students' competence and resilience as professional social work practitioners. Students will learn to respond proactively to the challenges and changes in society in general and in the social work field in particular. Students will be encouraged to integrate theories and practice, to generate new insights to improve practice and to evolve a personalized approach to practice. The emphasis of the teaching and learning is to cultivate generic scholarship in social work practice for the development of competent and reflective practitioners.

To integrate theories and practice in social work practice with a broad knowledge base does not imply direct technical solutions to practical situations. Instead, it implies a systematic process to facilitate awareness among social workers of the issues and problems confronting them and to enable them to develop the ability to relate these issues to a holistic understanding of social work practice. The essence of this kind of development is to create reflective social workers who are able to think about, articulate, be self-critical of, and constantly evaluate their application of theories and knowledge in different contexts, and to evolve their own personal perspectives and approaches to professional practice.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of study, students will be able to:

- (a) Acquire a contextualized understanding of social work practice in the political, economic, and social contexts of Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland.

- (b) Develop the humanistic value commitment of professional workers in order to acquire both the qualities and the ability to deal with the competing values and ethical dimensions of decision making and also the capacity to address the tensions, uncertainties, and conflicts arising from the decision-making process.
- (c) Integrate a broad foundation of knowledge with the professional knowledge and skills of social work practice in order to resolve problems with clients in specific service settings.
- (d) Develop the attitudes and methods required to continue to learn, change, and grow as a person and as a professional.

For more details, please refer to student admission cohort's Programme Requirement Document.

2.1.2 Objectives of Fieldwork

Fieldwork I

MSW students will undertake MSW Fieldwork I in the second year (Semester 1 & 2) of their three-year part-time studies. In total, there will be 400 hours in the placement unit and students need to attend a series of workshops before the fieldwork. Students will be matched to non-government organizations, government departments, and social service organizations for their placement. Only those students who are registered social workers (RSW) can apply for attached placement in Fieldwork I.

Having taken the subjects of Critical Introduction to Social Work, Advanced Social Work Theory & Practice I, and the Social Work Practice Workshop, students should become oriented to the philosophy, values, skills, and knowledge of social work practice. By the time the placement commences, students should also have acquired, through the subjects in human behaviour & social sciences, social welfare systems & social policy, the tools for reflecting on and analyzing the social contexts in general, and the policy and organizational contexts in particular. The conceptual building blocks, as well as the espoused theories, should illuminate an understanding of human behaviour and its implications.

In addition, students are expected to acquire the knowledge and intervention skills focused on the complex needs and problems of a client system. Students will become increasingly oriented to their anticipated work roles and more competent in such skill areas as translating concepts and theories to the real world; transferring theories from one discourse to another, and problem-solving.

The major aim of Fieldwork I is a beginning phase of educating a professionally reflective, self-evaluating, knowledgeable, competent, and developing social worker who is starting to address the complex needs and problems of society with conflicting values. The specific objectives of Fieldwork I are to enable the students to:

- (a) Practice according to social work values and ethical principles;

- (b) Demonstrate a sense of awareness of social problems and current issues towards the well-being of people;
- (c) Acquire knowledge relevant to social work practice;
- (d) Develop competencies in generic social work practice;
- (e) Integrate knowledge and theories to practice; and
- (f) Accepting accountability in service delivery and their own learning.

Fieldwork II

MSW students will undertake MSW Fieldwork II in the third year (Semester 1 & 2) of their three-year part-time studies. Students are required to fulfill 400 hours in the placement unit and attend relevant workshops relating to fieldwork. The placement unit must be a social service organization which is different from their first fieldwork placement. An alternate mode of Fieldwork Placement could also be adopted (concurrent or block placement) to maximize the learning opportunities for part-time students. Students may also choose to do their fieldwork in overseas countries.

Aside from the subjects taken in year one, the students should have acquired, through the subjects in Practice Research and the fieldwork placement in year two, the knowledge and skills in analysing complex social problems. Students may begin to focus their efforts on a specific client group which he/she feels interested in. MSW Fieldwork II serves as a practice opportunity for students to realize and actualize intervention strategies and skills with social work values and a code of practice. In this fieldwork placement, individual students will develop his/her own personalized theory or style of practice.

The major aim of MSW Fieldwork II is the completion of educating a professionally reflective, knowledgeable, competent and developing social worker who is able to address the complex needs and problems of society with conflicting values. The specific objectives of Fieldwork II are to enable the students to:

- (a) Internalize professional values, attitudes and to enhance the effective functioning of the various roles of social workers;
- (b) Reflect on social problems and current issues from different perspective;
- (c) Develop competencies in social work practice with a specific client group and expand their knowledge base;
- (d) Consolidate their in-depth understanding of the needs and problems of a specific client system and develop the skills in conducting social work tasks from data collection to termination;
- (e) Evaluate and reflect on the constraints of concepts and theories when applying to a specific client group; and
- (f) Critically reflect on learning needs, supervision, and accountability in service delivery.

Attached placement

Part-time students with a full-time job in relevant social service organizations may consider taking attached placement if they decide not to take on a fieldwork placement arranged by the Fieldwork Coordination Team. However, students must apply within the said period announced at the beginning of each academic year. Each application will be assessed individually according to the Principles and Criteria for Application of Attached Placement in G02.

Offshore placement

Offshore placements, usually in the form of summer block placements, are arranged to promote an awareness of the international perspectives of social work and an appreciation of practice in different cultures. The number of places for offshore placements is limited, depending on the availability of funds and fieldwork opportunities outside of Hong Kong. Students are invited to apply for offshore placement for fieldwork II in Semester 1 of each academic year and a screening exercise is organized to select suitable candidates. Selected students are assigned to undertake fieldwork in welfare agencies overseas. Successful candidates with financial difficulty may apply for a financial subsidy from the Department. The financial subsidy from the Department is subject to available funding for the current year and vetting is required.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN FIELDWORK

To ensure achievement of the fieldwork objectives noted above and to facilitate a student's effective learning, fieldwork must be perceived as a joint venture by all parties concerned, which necessitates ongoing communication among the Department, agencies, fieldwork supervisors and students. Their roles are often complementary, each contributing to a sound educational experience in fieldwork practice teaching.

3.1 The Department of Applied Social Sciences (APSS)

Through its Fieldwork Coordinating Team, the Department is responsible for the planning, liaison, development, and coordination of fieldwork placements for various Social Work Programmes. The Team, comprising the Director of Fieldwork Education and Fieldwork Coordinators, (contacts can be obtained from the website of Fieldwork Resources Website: <http://www.polyu.edu.hk/apss/spis/>) performs the following duties:

3.1.1 Projection and confirmation of placement

- (a) Solicit students' interest and choice of placement settings.
- (b) Explore and assess agencies for fieldwork placement.
- (c) Make placement requests to and confirm placement offers with agencies.
- (d) Confer with agency staff regarding the learning opportunities for students generally, thus preparing for the fieldwork supervisor to follow-up regarding specific assignments.

3.1.2 Preparation for commencement of placement

- (a) Match students and fieldwork supervisors to placement units.
- (b) Inform agencies, fieldwork supervisors and students about fieldwork matching.
- (c) Prepare students and fieldwork supervisors for the commencement of placements by planning and convening preparatory workshops and fieldwork supervisors' meetings.

3.1.3 Monitoring the progress of placement

- (a) Plan and convene the fieldwork supervisors' meeting(s) to review the progress of placement.
- (b) Provide consultation on policies and procedures to fieldwork supervisors, students, and agency staff during fieldwork.
- (c) Handle special cases such as prolonged sickness of a student or a student with learning problems and, if necessary, refer the case to the respective Programme Leader or Assistant Programme Leader(s).
- (d) Act as mediators in the case of formal or informal appeals, handle disputes and disagreements on fieldwork supervision and assessment, and resolve any other issues relating to fieldwork placement.
- (e) Review the suitability of a fieldwork placement unit and solicit feedback from the agency, the fieldwork supervisor and students.
- (f) Facilitate fieldwork learning by planning and convening preparatory workshops for students.

3.1.4 Coordination and development of Fieldwork Supervisors

- (a) Coordinate with fieldwork supervisors to ensure they take up active roles in fieldwork supervisor meetings, preparatory workshops, integrative workshops, and other fieldwork-related activities.
- (b) Plan and convene staff development programmes on fieldwork practice teaching.
- (c) Coordinate activities (e.g., visits) which are of common concern to supervisors in general or to groups of supervisors in one district or one particular client group.

3.1.5 Administrative responsibilities

- (a) Screen fieldwork project expenses and travelling claims submitted by students and endorsed by the supervisor.
- (b) Compile and revise fieldwork documentation, e.g., fieldwork manual and fieldwork evaluation form.
- (c) Represent fieldwork supervisors on the Board of Examiners.

3.2 The Agency

Agencies are selected for their commitment and capacity to provide a suitable environment for student learning and professional development. Their key responsibilities are the following:

- (a) Provide a learning atmosphere where students are received as professionals under training.
- (b) Discuss with the Fieldwork Coordination Team the range of learning opportunities that can be provided to students.
- (c) Provide necessary support such as office space, materials, and equipment, so that students can fulfil their duties satisfactorily.
- (d) Provide students with resources to cover costs incurred while carrying out agency duties, for example travelling costs and project expenses, as agreed by the agency.
- (e) Arrange an agency orientation programme for students, in collaboration with the fieldwork supervisor and/or the fieldwork coordinator.
- (f) Facilitate student participation in agency events such as conferences, staff meetings and staff training sessions as appropriate.
- (g) Maintain close communication with the Fieldwork Coordination Team and the fieldwork supervisor, and offer continuous feedback and suggestions on aspects of the programme including with regard to general improvement of fieldwork supervision and academic curriculum review.
- (h) Provide feedback to the Fieldwork Coordination Team on the performance of students and comments on fieldwork coordination and supervision.

In the social work curriculum, fieldwork placement is the mandatory practicum for social workers registration. Agencies offering fieldwork placement to students do not form an employer-employee relationship and thus is not regulated by the Minimum Wage Ordinance introduced in May 2011.

3.3 The Fieldwork Supervisor

The fieldwork supervisor is a vital resource in developing a sound educational experience for students throughout the learning process. The responsibilities of the fieldwork supervisor include:

3.3.1 Engaging students in fieldwork

- (a) Orientate students to the agency, its policies, and procedures so that the students can begin their practice effectively.
- (b) Facilitate students' understanding and assessment of the community.
- (c) Facilitate students in preparing a learning contract that is mutually agreed between supervisor and student (ref. para. 4.3).
- (d) Assign tasks that will best meet students' educational needs.

- (e) Make available to students appropriate learning experiences such as agency visits and attendance at seminars, conferences and staff meetings.

3.3.2 Supervision, evaluation and assessment

- (a) Continuously assess the educational progress of students, i.e., their level of competence, their learning needs and the best way of achieving these.
- (b) Help students to integrate theoretical knowledge and previous experiences with present practice.
- (c) Provide at least two supervision hours per week for each student in concurrent placement or 2.5 hours for summer block placement.

Supervision hours should be direct contact hours with students and exclude time for reading written assignments. At least 50% of the total supervision hours should be conducted on-site and on an individual basis. Live supervision is encouraged. It is desired that regular supervision sessions be arranged and held in the fieldwork setting, so that regular, frequent, and timely contact with placement unit personnel can be assured.

- (d) Conduct the mid-term evaluation with students;
 - (i) Review the progress of placement with reference to the learning contract;
 - (ii) Revise the learning contract with students if necessary;
 - (iii) Give specific assessment comments and written comments on students' performance and written assignments.
 - (iv) Submit Mid-term Evaluation Report (F01) via CLIPS (for Concurrent Placement only).
- (e) Conduct a final evaluation with students to assess their performance.
- (f) Submit Final Evaluation Report (F02) together with the mark sheet.
- (g) Students are required to submit their complete set of written assignments for internal moderation. For detailed information on the purpose and procedures of internal moderation, please refer to the student handbook.

3.3.3 Administrative responsibilities

- (a) Participate in the supervisors' meetings, orientation, and staff development seminars/programmes and, when necessary, attend the Board of Examiners meetings.
- (b) Liaise closely with the fieldwork coordinator concerned, especially when specific student learning difficulties are identified.
- (c) Submit claim forms and/or report any accident promptly.
- (d) Endorse the timesheet and leave application, if applicable, via the Clinical Placement System (CLIPS).

- (e) Complete the mid-term evaluation form (for concurrent placement only) via the CLIPS within the specified period.

3.4 The Students

Students in fieldwork are expected to perform themselves in a way that reflects their accountability to the clients, the agency, the community, and the Department. In addition, they should play an active role in their own learning and demonstrate initiative that is commensurate with the responsibilities of a social worker.

The students' responsibilities include:

- (a) Preparing themselves with adequate time to be involved in the placement. Students have to fulfil the 400-hours required for placement and will most likely fail the subject if this requirement is not met
- (b) Working within agency policies and procedures
- (c) Observing the agency's working hours
- (d) Preparing a learning contract and completing assignments responsibly
- (e) Attending orientation meetings, seminars, workshops, and conferences and other gatherings as convened by the Fieldwork Coordination Team or the agency
- (f) Maintaining suitable and timely records/reports/recordings accounting for their progress in completing assignments
- (g) Participating actively in supervisory sessions and preparing adequately for such occasions.
- (h) Participating actively in the ongoing, mid-term and final evaluation of their performance, and submitting a self-evaluation report to their fieldwork supervisors during the mid-term and at the end of the placement (ref. Guidelines for Student Self Evaluation in Fieldwork – G03)
- (i) Submitting the Student Questionnaire on Fieldwork (F03) to Fieldwork Coordinators to facilitate future planning for placement
- (j) Taking the initiatives to approach the fieldwork coordinators in order to report and discuss any issues encountered during the placement period

4. MAJOR TASKS IN FIELDWORK PROCESS

The fieldwork process comprises several major tasks, which are outlined below.

4.1 Pre-placement Induction

Pre-placement induction for students involves two types of activities:

4.1.1 Preparatory Workshops

The Fieldwork Coordination Team arranges two specific fieldwork placement induction workshops for students prior to each fieldwork placement. These workshops offer an overview of available services and their roles in placement

practice and familiarize them with the fieldwork-specific system, i.e. Clinical Placement System (CLIPS). Furthermore, the workshops detail the fieldwork placement process, encompassing the goals, expectations, and requirements of the placement, which help students understand what to expect and prepares them for the upcoming fieldwork experience.

In addition to these two induction workshops, a series of preparatory workshops are organized during and before Fieldwork I and Fieldwork II to enhance students' knowledge and skills for placement practice. The Social Workers Registration Board has established specific requirements for fieldwork placements that the social work programme must adhere to for qualification recognition. The workshop topics can be found in reference to G04. Through these preparatory workshops, we aim to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) Address the ethical considerations and professional standards that social work students must adhere to during their fieldwork placement, including standards for technology in social work practice;
- (b) Familiarize students with the documentation requirements of the fieldwork placement and provide training on maintaining accurate and confidential records while adhering to legal and ethical guidelines;
- (c) Equip students with specific knowledge and skills relevant to their fieldwork context and practice.

4.1.2 Pre-placement session of fieldwork supervisors and students

Other than making practical arrangements with the students (e.g., when to report for duty on the first day of fieldwork), the pre-placement session between supervisor and students serves the major function of helping students to move into the placement with greater ease, and of giving them a chance to briefly meet their supervisor in person before the placement starts.

This session may also be used by the fieldwork supervisor for:

- (a) Assigning relevant readings;
- (b) Planning with students the work schedule for the beginning weeks of placement; and
- (c) Helping students to start thinking and drawing up specific learning objectives, based on
 - (i) Students' perceptions of their own needs, and
 - (ii) Information from the course coordinator or tutor relating to student weaknesses and strengths.

4.2 Orientation Programmes

Orientation programmes are usually of two types: (a) those planned by the fieldwork supervisor, in consultation with the agency and the student, to familiarize the student

with the agency and the service unit to which they are attached; (b) those related to the neighbourhood of the placement unit, and to other organizations in Hong Kong operating similar services.

4.2.1 Agency orientation

- (a) Background information on the agency services and functions should be given to students prior to the commencement of the placement or as soon as possible thereafter. Students should also assume the responsibility of becoming acquainted with the agency.
- (b) On commencement of placement, the supervisor has the dual role of helping the students to integrate into the agency while at the same time helping the agency to accept and, as far as possible, to accommodate students' learning needs. Depending on the availability of resources, agency personnel may be invited to contribute to the orientation programme.
- (c) Students should be helped to familiarize themselves with:
 - (i) The objectives and service nature of the agency, the target clientele, and their primary needs, as well as the rules and regulations of the agency/unit;
 - (ii) The organizational structure of the agency, the various types, and levels of staff and their respective roles;
 - (iii) Procedures for compiling all agency-required documents in compliance with any specific requirements of the agency; and
 - (iv) The agency staff whom students can approach for assistance.
- (d) Students should have access to important reference materials such as procedure manuals, directories and information regarding community resources. Students should learn to use these resources in order to assist them in helping their clients.

4.2.2 Additional orientation visits

Most students find it helpful in orientation visits to agencies of related services and to key community resources. Such visits help to broaden the outlook of students especially if a discussion or a reporting back session can be held afterwards. However, orientation visits do not need to take place all at the same time in the initial phase of the placement, nor should they distract the students from completion of assignments.

4.3 Learning Contract

A learning plan enables students to begin considering their expectations regarding their forthcoming placement and to translate their expectations into real learning tasks and process. With mutual agreement between the supervisor and student, the learning plan

can be turned into a **learning contract** that helps to guide the progress of learning in placement.

4.3.1 Functions of the learning contract

Functions of a learning contract are as follows:

- (a) Encourage students to be aware of and responsible for their own learning needs;
- (b) Set realistic learning tasks and a progress plan that considers the needs and constraints of the agency, community, clients, and student in placement;
- (c) Facilitate a shared understanding between fieldwork supervisor and student of the mutual expectations of learning tasks, process, and progress in placement;
- (d) Improve standards in practice teaching and facilitate consistency and accountability in the supervisory relationship.

4.3.2 Preparation and revision of learning contract

It is crucial for the fieldwork supervisor to leverage the preparation process of the learning contract. It aims not only to understand the student's learning needs but also to motivate the student to develop their own learning plan. Additionally, this process provides an opportunity for both the supervisor and the student to ensure effective communication of their mutual expectations. An open and sincere attitude from both parties is essential for effective communication in setting a learning contract.

While drawing up the learning contract, the student should not focus exclusively on their own needs but rather on an appropriate balance among community needs, agency needs, client needs. Moreover, realistic consideration should be given to agency and community resources, opportunities, and constraints, as well as the student's own personal strengths and weaknesses.

The learning contract, as prepared and agreed at the beginning of placement, is subject to revision, if appropriate, after a period of progress in placement (e.g., during the mid-term evaluation). Any revision should be mutually agreed by both the fieldwork supervisor and student, and a revised learning contract should be prepared.

4.3.3 Contents of the learning contract

The following areas are suggested to be included in a learning contract:

- (a) Knowledge of the service in Hong Kong, the community and agency/unit;
- (b) Knowledge of the client group;
- (c) Knowledge and skills to be acquired by the end of placement;
- (d) Learning assignments and workload;
- (e) Particular learning needs of the student;

- (f) Supervision arrangements; and
- (g) Evaluation and assessment.

The fieldwork supervisor and student can add in other areas as they consider appropriate. For specific guidelines delineating items for each area, please refer to Guideline for Learning Contract in Fieldwork (G05) and the template for Learning Contract.

4.4 Assignments

4.4.1 Guiding principles in selecting appropriate assignments

In selecting assignments, the following suggestions can serve as guiding principles:

- (a) The tasks involved should be deemed manageable to students over the specified placement period. They should be appropriate to the objectives of the respective fieldwork and the level of competence and pace of learning of the individual student.
- (b) Assignment should provide students with substantial face-to-face contacts with the client system. Elements of planning, social welfare administration and small-scale social research can also be included as subsidiary learning opportunities.
- (c) As circumstances allow, students should be given the opportunity to practise and gain competence in more than one intervention approach. This will enrich the student's experience in consolidating knowledge of and skills in different approaches to solving of problems.
- (d) The fieldwork experience should ideally comprise a range of types of problems, ages of clients, and forms of intervention where feasible. It is advisable to allocate some new cases/groups/mass programme/projects so that students will have the opportunity to engage the entire helping process. For those tasks transferred by agency staff, the goal of intervention should be made explicit to the students. In matching students to the placement setting, consideration is given to ensuring that students are likely to have substantial direct contact with client system related to student's choice of optional study. However, this does not imply confining student's exposure to one type of problem.
- (e) The tasks assigned should progress gradually from a simple to complex and from imposing less to greater demands on the students. Assignments requiring aspects such as inter-agency collaboration, teamwork with other professionals in secondary settings, multi-dimensional assessment skills with malfunctioning individuals and families, techniques for resolving negativism and hostility of a community, competence in modifying destructive interactional patterns, and effecting environmental changes etc. are considered as appropriate once students have become familiar with the field learning situation.

- (f) The tasks suggested should offer opportunities for learning the differential use of self and the dynamic role of the social worker such as an enabler, advocate, and consultant. Similarly, learning tasks should provide opportunities for examining social work ethics and professional attitudes.

4.4.2 Assignment Expectations

Fieldwork I

As most of the students normally do not have much experience in the social work field, the first fieldwork placement is thus designed for the non-social work degree holders who usually have no or limited social work experience. Although the first year of study stresses experiential learning and students are provided opportunities to familiarize themselves with the social work field, they should be treated as novice and well-planned orientation programmes are necessary.

As Fieldwork I serves a major integrative function for the year two students, the fieldwork assignments should be related to the curriculum of the first year. In particular, the assignments should enable the students to practice generic social work or employ the process model in social work intervention.

Fieldwork II

Students are required to complete Fieldwork II in their third year of studies. Fieldwork assignments should always be related to the curriculum and the level of work required for beginning graduate social workers.

Although most of the students are mature adults with working experience, general principles developed for teaching adult learners such as student-centred approach, should be adopted. In addition, the fieldwork situation require the student to work with a specific client system, which is unfamiliar to the student. Therefore, students on their first entry into the present placement normally need a short period for recapitulation on those practice skills. During this period, the guidance and support of the supervisor are of paramount importance. After this initial period, the average student should be able to settle into the placement.

4.4.3 Workload

In determining the overall assignment loading for students, the fieldwork supervisor should take into consideration:

- (a) The nature and level of complexity of the assignments;
- (b) The ability of the students;
- (c) The expectations of the Department and the agency;
- (d) A balance of service and learning; and
- (e) The need to train the students to shoulder the minimum workload required in a future job.

Block Placement

As a general guideline, the total workload for a summer block placement may consist of:

- (a) Six to eight cases; or
- (b) One group plus two to four cases, or one group plus one project/mass programme (depending on their scale), or two short-term groups; or
- (c) One to two projects (depending on their scale).

Concurrent Placement

- (a) Six to eight cases, or
- (b) One group plus two to four cases, or one group plus mass programme (depending on their scale), or two groups; or
- (c) One project plus one to two cases, or one project plus one group, or two projects.

The above guidelines are for reference only. The actual assignments may be a flexible combination of these scenarios, and the exact workload should be worked out between students and their fieldwork supervisors. Workload should increase gradually over the placement period. Normally, students are expected to devote at least half of their fieldwork time to direct service to clients. This may include preparing and conducting interviews, group sessions or programme sessions, as well as follow-up actions.

4.4.4 Additional learning experiences

As far as possible, students should be encouraged to participate in the agency's staff meetings, case conferences, team meetings and other professional activities that may be of learning value.

4.4.5 Guidelines on written assignments

- (a) Types and workload of written assignments.

Written assignments are an integral part of fieldwork learning. Students must fulfil both agency and departmental requirements. Students should follow agency requirements on use of language regarding the filing of reports and records. English is the expected language used for written assignments except when the fieldwork agency requires otherwise. Please refer to G08 on the Types of Assignments in Fieldwork. In determining the appropriate assignments for students, the fieldwork supervisor should consider the following:

- (i) The ability and efficiency of students displayed in their written work;
- (ii) The learning purpose of each written assignment;
- (iii) The progress of fieldwork placement;
- (iv) The difference between block and concurrent placement; and

- (v) The difference between the first and second placement.
- (b) Student difficulties coping with the requirements of written assignment:

Students are encouraged to examine and discuss any issues they encounter in an open manner with their supervisor. Without compromising teaching and learning quality, the supervisor should give advice and explore measures that can help students cope with pressure. The supervisor should alert the relevant programme coordinators about a student's particular situation and seek advice or assistance whenever necessary.

4.4.6 Submission of written assignments

- (a) Forms, reports, and recordings required by the agency are the property of the agency.
- (b) All versions of students' written work should be shared with the Department via OneDrive and retained for the specified retention period.
- (c) The mid-term (for concurrent placement only) and final evaluation report of the fieldwork supervisor should be read and signed by the student.
- (d) With reference to the Personal Data (Privacy Ordinance), all students must observe the Guidelines to Fieldwork Supervisors and Students (Privacy and Personal Data Protection) (G09).

4.5 Supervision

4.5.1 Aim of fieldwork supervision

The aim of supervision is to develop, reinforce and strengthen students' ability to acquire adequate knowledge of personality growth and the dynamics of behaviour; establish an effective helping relationship; and enhance the constructive use of self and of resources in rendering service.

To develop their professional competence, supervision should help students balance and integrate intellectual as well as affective responses in practice. Emotional reactions (including frustration, dissatisfaction, disillusionment and value conflicts) are seen as part of students' learning. Students should learn to manage their emotions appropriately and prevent these from impeding their performance. Concern for the emotional maturity of students, the development of appropriate attitudes, and the enhancement of self-awareness are all integral components of fieldwork supervision.

Social work supervision comprises three main components, i.e., the educational, administrative and supportive functions. Apart from giving guidance and instruction to students, fieldwork supervisors maintain effective liaison with the agency so as to facilitate the effective integration of the student into the agency culture and practice. At the same time, supervisors should oversee all aspects of the fieldwork placement including service accountability to clients.

4.5.2 Types of supervision

(a) Individual Session

The individual supervisory session is important for the student's development as it affords them the opportunity of individual attention and personal understanding from the supervisor. This enables them to learn, receive encouragement and grow in their ability to perform their duties with good judgment and increasing independence.

Weekly sessions are required, with students expected to hand in their plans, recordings, and reports in advance so that both the student and supervisor can prepare for the substance of the supervision.

Guidance and support during individual supervisory sessions help students more effectively apply knowledge and skills learned in class to the actual practice situation. The supervisor aims to identify the student's level of learning and the relevant concepts taught in class so that the content of the supervision sessions can be appropriately related to the theoretical input of the relevant subjects.

A major component in individual supervisory sessions is support of the development of students' analytical thinking abilities. It is believed that a professional helping person must learn how to think analytically before effective practice is possible. Student participation in supervisory sessions is therefore vital. Supervisory sessions should not be monologues or lectures. The students should be encouraged to engage in critical thinking and to seek clarification.

The individual supervisory session should enable the student to review and reflect on the use and purpose of the selected techniques, as well as comprehend the rationale behind them.

(b) Group Supervisory Session

Supervisors may consider adopting a group approach in supervision. There is increasing recognition of the potential of the group as an agent of change/educational process having positive educational effects on the student.

In such instances, the reasons for using group supervision in the field should be clearly explained to the students and the value of individual participation emphasized. In order to maximize the learning potential of the group situation, adequate preparation should be made and relevant materials may be brought into the group for discussion.

Group supervisory sessions provide students with an opportunity to discuss their observations and share their experiences with their fieldmates. They stimulate group thinking, often producing creative ideas and changing the outlook of students. They also provide opportunities for students to develop their ability in preparing and presenting a case or group materials, as well as in leading discussions.

(c) Live supervision

Fieldwork supervisors are required to conduct at least one live supervision during a student's practice. These can focus reflection more upon the mutually shared experience of practice instead of simply discussing recalled material from recordings. Usually, the supervisor would not intervene unless any urgent issues needed to be addressed. The live supervision should obtain the client's consent beforehand.

(d) Other forms of supervisory contact

Besides individual and group supervisory sessions, workshops on special topics may be organized so that students can benefit from a comprehensive analysis of issues of common interest.

4.5.3 Supervisory relationship

The supervisory relationship is an important element in the teaching-learning process. A positive supervisory relationship can help modify students' attitude and reduce anxiety. Sincerity and empathy are important if students are to learn during the process of supervision.

Students will inevitably be made anxious by the demand for evaluation and self-critique. At times, the supervisory relationship may become tense and psychological support may be necessary. Sometimes, it is necessary to be more student-oriented so as to make it possible for the students to relax and adopt a more open attitude to the review and evaluation of their work.

The use of confrontation is sometimes necessary in supervision in order to get across an important point. Disagreement can be healthy and lead to further development in the learning process.

Social work students are adult learners who require a highly individualized approach. An understanding of the strengths and limitations of each individual learner helps to set realistic goals and expectations of a student's performance.

Strains within the supervisory relationship may arise for various reasons. It is important that both supervisors and students avoid interpreting such strains as mere personality clashes and avoid taking these strains personally. Should such strains exist, it is important for both student and supervisor to respect each other and, wherever necessary, seek clarification on differences in viewpoints so that the progress of learning is not impeded. Both parties are encouraged to approach the fieldwork coordinator for resolution if necessary.

4.6 **Evaluation**

4.6.1 Purpose

Fieldwork evaluation is an objective appraisal of a student's overall functioning on the job over a specific period of time by their supervisor. It includes both evaluation of specific learning experience during placement (usually with reference to the learning contract) and assessment on performance.

Fieldwork evaluation has the following key characteristics:

- (a) It is a mutual process: the supervisor should adopt an unbiased, objective, and reasonable attitude whilst the student should uphold an open, positive and receptive attitude.
- (b) It should be an ongoing process: evaluation begins at the initial stage of the fieldwork placement and proceeds throughout the entire fieldwork placement.
- (c) It should be well substantiated: evaluation should be based on clearly specified, realistic and achievable standards and judgments substantiated with evidence. Please refer to the Mid-term Evaluation Report (F01), Final Evaluation Report (F02) and 4.6.3 (a). The artistic aspect of social work is recognised, and it is understood that such aspects are not always measurable. However, judgment with reference to the course content is still attainable.
- (d) It is concerned with both the quality of performance and the quality of individual accomplishments of the student.
- (e) It is an instrument that should contribute to the student's professional growth as a social worker.

4.6.2 Steps in carrying out fieldwork evaluation

It should be emphasized that the following steps are for guidelines only.

- (a) From the very beginning of placement, fieldwork supervisors should help students appreciate the idea that evaluation commences at the initial stage of the fieldwork placement and that it is an ongoing process that continues throughout the whole placement.
- (b) The Mid-term Evaluation Report (F01, for concurrent placement only), Final Evaluation Report (F02) and Guidelines for Students Self Evaluation Report on Fieldwork Placement (G03) should be given to students at the initial stage of each fieldwork placement.
- (c) Students will be asked to review these forms and to see if there are any questions or areas that they would like to clarify with their supervisor during supervision.
- (d) Students should be helped to realize that every fieldwork supervisory session is, in fact, a mini-evaluation exercise. Through the exchange of ideas and discussion between the supervisor and students, the latter's performance and progress in fieldwork can be more thoroughly analysed and assessed. Students should keep an open attitude and be ready to accept their supervisors' comments and criticisms.
- (e) A mid-term evaluation exercise should be carried out at a mutually agreed time. Students from concurrent placement are required to submit the Mid-term Evaluation Report (F01 – Part A) based on the learning contract, as well as on some of the items as listed in the Fieldwork Evaluation Report and Guidelines for Students Self Evaluation Report. Through the exercise, a student can develop a greater understanding of their previous performance, strengths and weaknesses. It can also serve

as a reference point for a student to proceed from in order to make further progress in the latter part of the fieldwork placement. A mid-term evaluation report (F01 - Part B) may be prepared prior to the mid-term evaluation session for discussion purposes.

For summer block placement, there will be no written mid-term evaluation report but formal meetings with the agency coordinator and supervisor are recommended.

- (f) If a fieldwork supervisor finds a student's performance unsatisfactory during this mid-term evaluation exercise, an initial warning, either verbal, written, or both, should be given. Most students appreciate supervisors who help them in formulating concrete steps to reach the level of competence expected. The fieldwork supervisor should immediately alert the responsible fieldwork coordinator of any potential failure cases when they detect any breach of professional ethics or delays in submission of written assignments.
- (g) Towards the end of fieldwork placement, supervisor should remind students that an overall evaluation will be carried out at the end of the placement. The fieldwork supervisor and the student should then fix a date on which to carry out a final evaluation of the student's performance in the fieldwork placement.
- (h) Students will be asked to complete their self-evaluation reports of the fieldwork placement based on the Guidelines for Students Self Evaluation Report on Fieldwork Placement. Additional points can be added if necessary. Students should then submit the self-evaluation reports to their supervisor prior to fieldwork evaluation.
- (i) Meanwhile, it may also be necessary for a supervisor to review a student's past recordings, reports, and other relevant documentation in order to formulate a more comprehensive analysis of the performance over the entire fieldwork placement. A Fieldwork Evaluation Report will be prepared before the final evaluation meeting for discussion purposes. Supervisors are encouraged to elaborate on the student's performance by providing concrete examples to justify the assigned grades.
- (j) During the Final Evaluation Meeting, the supervisor will verbally conduct an evaluation exercise with the students based on the items listed in the Final Evaluation Report. Open discussion is encouraged.
- (k) The report should be shown to the students for review. Supervisors and students can engage in further discussion and clarification as needed. Students are expected to sign the report to acknowledge that they have read it; however, this does not necessarily imply total agreement. If necessary, students can request to attach statements to the report that address major points of disagreement.
- (l) Unless stated otherwise, the Fieldwork Evaluation Report, together with the Student's Self Evaluation Report, the Learning Contract, and a full set of the student's works, should normally reach the Department on or before the date specified by the Fieldwork Coordination Team. This date would always be set within a reasonable period upon official termination of the fieldwork placement.

4.6.3 Fieldwork supervisor evaluation of a student fieldwork performance

The written evaluation of a student's performance is designed to formalize what has been shared with the student by the supervisor during their weekly supervisory sessions. (Please refer to G06 and G07 for details of the Assessment Criteria in Fieldwork.)

(a) Areas for evaluation

There are five areas of assessment in the evaluation of student performance. A student must pass ALL FIVE areas in order to pass fieldwork. Failure in one area of evaluation will result in failure for fieldwork placement overall.

(i) Professional Attitudes, Values & Behaviour

- Belief in the basic assumptions and values of social work
- Social awareness
- Commitment to service

(ii) Knowledge Areas

- Knowledge of social welfare policy and services
- Understanding of the organization
- Understanding of the client system
- Commitment to expand the knowledge base

(iii) Practice Competence

- Observation and information collection
- Assessment of needs and resources
- Formulation of objectives and planning of intervention
- Implementation and co-ordination of efforts
- Termination and evaluation
- Communication and relationship building

(iv) Integration of Theory and Practice

- Orientation towards the integration of classroom learning
- Understanding of theories and concepts
- Application of theories and concepts in direct practice

(v) Service and Learning Accountability

- Observation of agency rules and regulations
- Active participation and being responsible for learning
- Timely implementation and completion of work tasks and assignments
- Maintaining consistent and reasonable service output

(b) Failure in fieldwork

The assigning of a failing grade would be considered in fieldwork in any of the following circumstances:

- (i) Under normal circumstances, if a student demonstrates ability below the standards stated in the assessment areas

- (ii) If a student manifests behaviour that seriously violates the Code of Practice stipulated by the Hong Kong Social Workers Registration Board (G01).
 - (iii) If a student demonstrates consistent failure to benefit from a supervisor's suggestions and teaching, and holds a hostile and resistant attitude toward learning
 - (iv) If a student is frequently absent from fieldwork, though allowance would be given under special circumstances (e.g., death in the family, illness)
- (c) Termination of placement

With agreement between the fieldwork supervisor and the Fieldwork Coordination Team and in consultation with the placement agency, fieldwork placement would be terminated if a student performs unsatisfactorily.

(d) Grading of fieldwork performance

- (i) The grading of fieldwork adopts the University's Grade Point Average system. There are nine grades representing different levels of performance. "C" is a passing grade while below C is a failure grade. These grades are summarized in the table below:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Grade Point</u>
A+	Outstanding performance	4.3
A		4
A-		3.7
B+	Good performance	3.3
B		3
B-		2.7
C+	Satisfactory performance	2.3
C		2
*F	Poor performance (Failure)	0

The grade given is only an overall representation of the student's performance. Continuous and substantiated feedback from the supervisor during the placement as well as at the final evaluation is extremely important for the students' learning in the fieldwork placement.

A student must achieve at least **Grade C** in fieldwork for graduation with the award in order to meet the requirements for an application for registration as a Registered Social Worker (RSW) with the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) in Hong Kong.

- (ii) Differential weighing is assigned to each of the five areas of assessment distributed as follows:

For Fieldwork I (Foundation)

Professional Attitudes & Values & Behaviours	25%
Knowledge Areas	15%
Practice Competence	30%
Integration of Theory and Practice	20%
Service and Learning Accountability	10%

For Fieldwork II and III (Professional)

Professional Attitudes & Values & Behaviours	25%
Knowledge Areas	15%
Practice Competence	25%
Integration of Theory and Practice	25%
Service and Learning Accountability	10%

- (iii) For assessment of fieldwork, numeric marking is not required. The supervisor should assign a grade to each of the sub-areas. The overall recommended grade should be worked out in consideration of the sub-area grades and their weightings, based on the holistic impression of the supervisor. This **recommended** grade is indicative only and will be finalized by the Fieldwork Team after moderation. Clearly, the incongruity between sub-area grades and the overall grade should be avoided. The supervisor should clearly convey to the student the reasons for the grades awarded.
- (iv) The Department requires written mid-term reports (for concurrent placement only) and final evaluation reports. Moreover, fieldwork supervisors should promptly inform the fieldwork coordinators about any instances where a student receives a failing grade or is at risk of receiving one. This will enable timely provision of additional support to the concerned individuals.
- (v) In case the student fails in fieldwork, the Board of Examiners' Meeting will decide on the action to be taken. The final decision will depend on each individual student's merits/demerits.

(e) The Evaluation Report

Compiling written comments for the evaluation report is a way of elaborating on the performance of a student other than by simply assigning grades. Thus, supervisors are invited to elaborate on student's performance by providing concrete examples to justify the grades assigned for each of the five areas, together with overall comments. This gives the programme fieldwork coordinator a better understanding of an individual student's level of competence and highlights their future professional development training needs. The Department also believes that an evaluation report, written in a precise and concise manner, and

well-illustrated with examples drawn from the actual assignments, will help make the student better aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it is the Department's policy that student reading of the written report is a subject requirement. Fieldwork supervisors should observe the date by which evaluation reports have to be submitted.

SOFT COPY of the final evaluation reports without identifiable data of clients and agencies can be given to students upon their request within one month of the announcement of final grades by the department. Students are required to apply for the report copy by approaching the appropriate programme clerk.

(f) Students' feedback on fieldwork supervision and placement

It is both a right and responsibility of students to provide feedback on the learning opportunities available during placement and the quality of fieldwork supervision received. Feedback from students helps both supervisors and the fieldwork team to improve the quality of practice teaching in social work education. Hence, all students are expected to complete the online Student Questionnaire on Fieldwork (F03) and forward it to the Fieldwork Coordination Team by the end of their fieldwork placement.

(g) Students' disagreement to fieldwork evaluation

In case there are any points in the final evaluation report that a student does not agree with, further discussion should be carried out between the fieldwork supervisor and the student. Should the disagreement remain unresolved, the student can add a statement explaining their reason(s) for the disagreement and submit it via the supervisor, to the Director of Fieldwork Education.

Once the mark and grade have been endorsed by a Subject Assessment Review Panels (SARP) / Board of Examiners, the formal and standard procedures for any academic appeal against a decision of the SARP / Board of Examiners, adopted by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, shall apply. Students may refer to the Student Handbook for the appeal procedure.

5. PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENT IN FIELDWORK

5.1 Project Expenses

The provision of project expenses by the Department is to take care of situations where an agency cannot, or can only partially, pay project expenses incurred by a student in the field. The student can apply for the Department provision only when all the agency and community resources have been exhausted, and the project is indispensable for student's learning. It is normally expected that the agency should contribute to a project which is a service to the client group, besides being an opportunity for learning for the

student. Thus, all contributions from non-Polytechnic University sources should first be deducted before any project expense claim is made to the Department.

The procedures for applying for and claiming project expenses from the Department are as follow:

- 5.1.1 Since the Department does not set aside a fixed amount for this purpose, it is of paramount importance that the students should initiate the discussion with the fieldwork supervisor about their intention to apply as soon as possible, and before incurring any expenses.
- 5.1.2 The fieldwork supervisor and students should then explore how to make good use of the agency and other possible community resources, and obtain approval from the agency staff to offer such a project.
- 5.1.3 With the assistance of the fieldwork supervisor, students should then complete the Fieldwork Placement Student Application Form for Project Expenses Subsidy (F09), which should be submitted via the Director of Fieldwork Education to the Head of Department. Students and the fieldwork supervisor will be notified of the outcome of their application by the Department.
- 5.1.4 Reimbursements are normally made after the project is completed. Claims should be itemized on the standardized form (F09), accompanied by relevant receipts countersigned by the fieldwork supervisor. The claim form, once properly completed in duplicate, should be submitted to the General Office to allow timely processing and reimbursement.
- 5.1.5 The Administrative Assistant or delegate will then inform students when to collect the reimbursement.

5.2 Absence

- 5.2.1 For any fieldwork placement, attendance should be 100%. Fieldwork days missed for any reason will normally need to be made up later within the placement period. Absence from the field for personal reasons without prior approval of the Fieldwork Supervisor will not be accepted. In the case of illness necessitating absence from the field, the Fieldwork Supervisor should be promptly notified. If an extended leave of absence or hospitalization is anticipated, the Fieldwork Coordinator concerned should be consulted so that a prompt decision as to whether the placement might be concluded prematurely could be made. The minimum number of hours in fieldwork is stipulated in the course scheme. Any time missed must be made up at the agency, under the joint arrangement of the Fieldwork Coordinator and Supervisor.
- 5.2.2 As a general rule, the Department allows the use of overtime work to make up fieldwork days lost. However, if the number of hours lost extends over a lengthy period of time or is so sporadically spread over the placement that the continuity of services to clients as well as student learning are jeopardized, the Department may consider terminating the student placement upon consultation with the agency. Under such circumstances, whether a student is allowed to repeat the entire placement, to make up for the fieldwork time lost, or to perform any other

type of remedial duty at a later day will be considered on the merits of the individual case at the Board of Examiners' meeting.

- 5.2.3 All students applying for leave of absence on regularly scheduled fieldwork days must inform both the Fieldwork Supervisor and the agency verbally and in writing so that arrangements can be made to ensure that service to clients is minimally disrupted. Students should make reference to prescribed forms APSS 8 and AR 8 when applying for leave of absence. Applications occasioned by illness should be accompanied by a sick leave certificate signed officially by a qualified medical practitioner and submitted via CLIPS.
- 5.2.4 If a student applies to withdraw from or drop their placement, prior approval must be sought from the Director of Fieldwork Education and the Programme Leader. Justifications must be given. In undertaking professional placements, students are rendering service to the community as well as learning from direct practice, and so every effort must be made to minimize disruption to service delivery. The Supervisor should maintain close liaison with the agency to work out detailed alternative arrangements arising from any non-anticipated withdrawal.

5.3 Overtime

- 5.3.1 In fieldwork, some occasional overtime work is considered normal and should be expected and may not be credited. Any claim for occasional overtime must follow agency policies. If a student finds their fieldwork assignments are such that they result in a recurring problem, they should discuss this with their fieldwork supervisor so that a review of workload, the student's abilities and any other related issues can be made. This is particularly important since classroom and field learning are complementary. Excessive time spent on either aspect of the curriculum can upset the balance of student learning.
- 5.3.2 At times, the nature of a fieldwork assignment is such that the fieldwork might be regularly scheduled on a day other than normally designated fieldwork days. If, the fieldwork supervisor and the students judge that it is preferable or necessary for students to be in the field at weekends or on a public holiday may be counted as a substitute for the normally designated fieldwork day(s).
- 5.3.3 Extra fieldwork time may not be accumulated by students in order for them to leave before scheduled school holidays, to return late after school holidays or to complete fieldwork before the scheduled final day of fieldwork. Possible exceptional circumstances should be discussed with the supervisor and the agency.

5.4 Sexual Harassment

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University is committed to equal opportunities in academic pursuits and employment and to eliminating any form of discrimination against all staff, students, and other persons who have dealings with the University. Sexual harassment, being a form of discrimination, is prohibited and is unacceptable at all levels in the University community. Any staff member or student who is found to have contravened the University's Policy will be subject to disciplinary action. Please refer to the

University's website of Sexual Harassment Policy, (website: <https://www.polyu.edu.hk/ethicscommittee/sexual-harassment-policy/>) for a full description of the policy and practices in handling complaints concerning sexual harassment.

5.5 Public Liability Insurance & Group Personal Accident Insurance Claims

The University has a public liability insurance policy which protects it against claims which may be brought by third parties in those instances in which the University may be proven legally liable. The Group Personal Accident (for students) Policy has been in place since January 1998 for the better protection of students. It covers all students who suffer accidental bodily injury or death while participating in any curricular (including fieldwork) or extracurricular activities of the University, on and off-campus, within or outside Hong Kong. Details and claiming procedure can be found in G10 to G12.

5.6 Arrangement in Times of Service Disruption

The COVID-19 pandemic and other health emergencies have created new challenges to fieldwork education which may affect fieldwork arrangements due to disruption of service provision. While the fieldwork arrangements in each agency or service unit is likely to be highly context-specific and should be understood within the placement contexts, students and supervisors are advised to refer to the guideline (G13) if any agency service disruption occurs.

5.7 Privacy and Personal Data Protection

In accordance with the Code of Practice from the Social Workers Registration Board, the importance of privacy and personal data protection for clients and other stakeholders is strongly emphasized. Social Workers are required to cooperate in the implementation of this code of practice and abide by any disciplinary rulings based on it. They should also keep abreast of the laws of Hong Kong which may be amended from time to time. Social workers should take adequate and appropriate measures and action to prevent, discourage, correct, or expose the unethical code of other social workers. For the latest updates to the Code of Practice from the Hong Kong Social Workers Registration Board, please refer to their official website: <https://www.swrb.org.hk/en/index.asp>.

With the implementation of Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap.486) (PDPO), the Department has provided guidelines (G09) for fieldwork supervisors and students to follow during fieldwork practice. All placement students are required to sign the "Obligation to Privacy and Personal Data Protection" form (F04) before the commencement of their placement. All the written or electronic information derived from fieldwork placement should be deleted within one month from the final announcement of grades.

Students must also adhere to the privacy and personal data protection policies and principles of their fieldwork agency. No personal data of clients should be reviewed or kept after the placement ends. Any loss of personal data must be reported immediately to the fieldwork supervisor and agency mentor for further action.