

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES

Guidelines to Fieldwork Supervisors and Students
(re: Privacy and Personal Data Protection)

The purpose of the following guidelines is to sensitise fieldwork supervisor and student awareness of the implementation of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (PDO) and to minimise the risk of their being unintentionally involved in a breach of specific areas of the Ordinance.

1. **Data Protection Principles**

The contents of all written materials handed into fieldwork supervisors and/or academic staff should be free from personal data or information leading to direct identification of clients. It is suggested that disguised names can be used for individual clients: for example, Mrs Chan or Ah Keung; family genograms can be drawn using one person as the client and all others as related persons such as father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, brother and sister. In the case of community work projects, the exact location or names of districts can be verbally mentioned but not recorded, numbers can be used to denote households.

2. **Client's Right to be Informed**

Students should inform clients of the identity of a social work student from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the main purposes for which personal data are collected and used.

3. **Fairness of Interpretations Made**

In the writing down of client information and social work intervention, summary or process recording can be used as deemed appropriate. With the help of supervisors, students should make sure that their description and interpretation of client behaviour is evidenced, impartial and non-judgmental. They should also be mindful of the accuracy of information recorded, and the legitimacy and fairness of interpretations and analyses made. All recorded data are subject to access and correction by clients.

4. **Principle of Confidentiality**

Students and supervisors are reminded not to remove or make copies of any of **formal documents or personal data files of clients** that belong to the fieldwork agency. These should be treated as confidential documents. Student recordings and reports which are generated from client information are, also to be regarded as property of the agency. Students and supervisors have the right to make copies and use those reports for training purposes but such information should be handled with care.

5. **Use of Fax or E-mail**

Fax machine or e-mail should not be used for transmission or communication of client information.

6. **Audio/Video Recording and Photo Taking**

Audio and/or video recordings that reflect client wording and/or responses can only be used for training purposes. Students should consult their supervisor and obtain consent from the agency and client.

Students should never use a mobile phone to audio/video record and/or take photographs of clients. They are advised to use devices provided by the agency to do so if deemed necessary and to ensure the records (e.g. audio/video recordings or photographs) are secure and not taken away from the service unit.

Uploading any information, including photographs, featuring placement agencies, placement units or clients onto the web (e.g. Facebook, twitter, a blog or Instagram) is prohibited.

7. **Storage & Retention Period**

Throughout the training period, students and supervisors are obliged to strictly observe the principle of confidentiality in respect of client information and are advised to take good care in the security and storage of materials relating to client information. Students and supervisors are personally responsible and liable in case of client and/or service agency complaints arising from undue exposure of the personal information of clients.

During placement, students are required to use OneDrive for transmission and storage of fieldwork assignments. These electronic files should not carry agency information or personal information of clients. The use of portable storage devices such as USBs is prohibited.

Students and supervisors shall take responsibility to delete all written, printed and/or electronic copies and/or notes which containing any specific client personal information from their records within one month after the announcement of overall results. Students are required to sign the F03 Obligation to Privacy and Personal Data Protection Form at the end of their placement.

In the Department of Applied Social Sciences, all information contained in student files, including reports on student fieldwork is disposed of one year after graduation of the student.

8. **Consent Forms**

Students should adhere to all necessary procedures required by the fieldwork agency in obtaining the consent of clients in the provision of personal data, including the administration of consent forms (please refer to the Fieldwork Manual) if so required.

9. **Remarks**

Finally, it is important to note that the spirit of the Ordinance is to arouse our sense of responsibility in the protection of client information; and not to impede legitimate action. The Ordinance should not become an excuse for not asking for information or for not intervening when it is necessary to do so.