Social Work Field Education Code of Professional and Ethical Conduct

June 2020

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<th>Responsible Officer</th>
<th>Director of Professional Experience</th>
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<td>Approved by</td>
<td>School of Social Sciences Learning and Teaching Committee</td>
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<td>Responsible Organisational Unit</td>
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1 Introduction

This College of Arts, Law and Education (CALE) Code of Professional and Ethical Conduct (Code) contains rules which must be adhered to by all students undertaking Social Work placements. These rules constitute basic, non-negotiable requirements for student participation in Social Work placements or units at the University of Tasmania. It is not possible to create a rule for every situation or contingency, hence this Code also provides a framework for students to apply to different circumstances during their placement, and later as registered social workers.

In the past, ethical and moral behaviour has been based on the principle of ‘duty’ that implies a higher authority to which that duty is owed. This is no longer sufficient or adequate, in that:

- in a modern, pluralistic society there can be a number of competing and sometimes conflicting centres of authority;
- some people may feel that the concept is no longer relevant to them; and
- modern complex social work environments require a level of ethical maturity which goes beyond simply acting in obedience to an expected ideal of duty.

At the heart of this Code is the principle that ethical conduct is paying attention to the maintenance of equal, balanced, respectful, reciprocal and trusting relationships. Students are encouraged to consider all of their conduct in the light of these principles so, even if this Code makes no mention of a particular situation, which may confront them, they will be equipped to maintain the relationships involved with ethical maturity. To that purpose, this Code is constructed around a set of relational principles to which students undertaking placements must adhere.

2 General Requirements for Social Work Placements

2.1 I will abide by all the requirements and restrictions of the University of Tasmania:

- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Services and Facilities Use Policy
- Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning
- Plagiarism and Academic Integrity - Highly recommended that students read the University Statement on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity.

2.2 I will abide by the Social Work Field Education Guidelines and Procedures and comply with the associated Safety in Practice Compliance Requirements.

2.3 I will familiarise myself with, and abide by provisions of the following University of Tasmania Rules and Ordinances:

- Ordinance 8: Student Complaints
• **Ordinance 9: Student Discipline**

2.4 I will maintain communication with Social Work Field Education staff by:

- attending scheduled appointments with unit coordinators and supervisors and initiating additional contact where necessary;
- responding promptly to requests for information;
- completing all appropriate forms, including those used to record extenuating circumstances which may affect my placement;
- my University email account when using email;
- regularly checking and reading University e-mail, teaching noticeboards, MyLO and InPlace; and
- professionally responding and contributing to student feedback.

2.5 I will conduct myself in a professional manner when:

- receiving instruction and critical feedback; and
- questioning directions and decisions which are unclear.

3 **Relationship with Clients, Carers and Community**

**Principle:** A relationship of trust is based upon respect for the essential humanity and dignity of every person, especially those who are placed in positions of vulnerability.

3.1 I will not discriminate against or exploit clients on grounds of age, gender, ethnicity, creed, political affiliation or sexual orientation, nor impose my own values (social, spiritual, ideological) on patients/clients, their families, carers and members of the community.

3.2 I will respect a client’s right to refuse to participate in my learning. I will ensure that the client has been fully informed and I have their consent to my presence and involvement in their care.

3.3 I will, at all times, refrain from speaking or acting in ways which might imply that I am a qualified professional. In particular I will refrain from recommending or modifying treatment or suggesting any action that might be construed as provision of qualified professional advice.

3.4 I will at all times respect the individual autonomy of clients and ensure that any treatments or procedures in which I am involved are performed only with the informed consent of clients.

3.5 I will treat information about clients as confidential and will only discuss it with those directly involved in the client’s care.
3.6 I will not discuss clients by name or other identifying markers with other students or professionals or anyone else not involved in the client’s care.

3.7 I will respect as totally confidential all client records and will not access them except for purposes of direct care.

3.8 I will be honest in my dealings with clients and those who care for them.

3.9 I will not abuse the trust of a client or other vulnerable person, including a client’s family and/or carer.

3.10 I acknowledge that effective interpersonal communication occurs via verbal and facial expression and body language. I will ensure that my communication is professional and respectful and will not wear any form of clothing that interferes with this. I will expose my face fully to clients in all settings.

3.11 I will never use my professional position to establish or pursue a sexual, exploitative or other inappropriate relationship with anybody met on placement. This includes those close to the client, such as their carer, guardian, spouse, or the parent of a child client.

3.12 I will act quickly to protect clients from risk if I have good reason to believe that I or a colleague may not be fit to practise, by reporting concerns to my Social Work placement Coordinator.

3.13 I will recognise and where necessary acknowledge the limits of my specific professional competence (scope of practice) in order to protect the well-being of clients.

4 Relationship with Placement Provider

**Principle:** Maintenance of trust in any organisation is dependent on acceptance by its members to take responsibility for upholding the structures and purposes of that organisation.

4.1 I will conduct myself as a member of the Placement Provider while on placement. This includes dressing appropriately, using resources honestly and appropriately, adhering to agency hours, reporting illness to the field educator and cancelling appointments for that day, and generally conducting yourself in a professional manner.

4.2 I will familiarise myself with and uphold the [UTAS Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning for Students](PDF 32.5KB) and the [AASW Code of Ethics 2010](#).

4.3 I will take up opportunities for professional practice and participate in the work of the agency, including taking on social work tasks as soon as the field educator confirms the student is ready.
4.4 I will abide by the professional and ethical conduct requirements of the Placement Provider, including completion of any forms specific to their environment (i.e. confidentiality agreement forms).

4.5 I will conduct myself in a professional manner when:
   - receiving instruction and critical feedback;
   - questioning directions and decisions which are unclear; and
   - resolving conflict and negotiating with staff and patients/clients.

4.6 I will inform the Program as soon as possible of any disability, impairment or condition that might affect my capacity to safely undertake your social work placement. I will disclose this information in the annual Safety in Practice Agreement.

4.7 I will seek medical or other professional advice about such conditions (referred to in 4.2) and I will adhere to any management plan determined by the Head of Program or their nominee.

4.8 I will maintain appropriate standards of dress, appearance and personal hygiene while on Placement, so as not to cause confusion or offence to patients/clients, supervisors or colleagues or jeopardise the safety of myself or others.

4.9 I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to research and inform myself of any dress code requirements in for my Program/Profession or Placement Provider. I agree to conform to any such code.

5 Monitoring Professional and Ethical Conduct

Principle: Transparent evaluation of student conduct in practice is integral to the development of trust within the professional environment.

5.1 I am required to meet the professional and ethical conduct requirements of my professional association and Placement Provider and will participate in any Provider evaluations.

5.2 I am aware that my professional conduct is assessed during the professional experience placement components of my Social Work Field Education program.

5.3 I will also participate in reviews of my adherence to this Code if/as required by my Head of Program or delegate.
6 Sanctions and Penalties

Principle: Action is required to re-establish trust when this Code has been breached.

6.1 The Head of Program may, in accordance with the Social Work Placement Risk Management Procedure, remove a student from Professional Experience Placement either temporarily or permanently. A student may be withdrawn from, or deemed unable to continue Placement by the Head of Program or delegate if:

A. **The student has committed an act of misconduct as defined under University Ordinance 9.**

B. **The student’s behaviour has breached the School of Social Sciences Code of Professional and Ethical Conduct, professional body conduct standards and/or other rules of the professional experience placement provider.**

C. **The student is consistently unable, after due guidance and instruction, to perform at the required standard as assessed by supervising university or professional experience facilitators/preceptors.**

D. **The student’s application of theory in practice is significantly below the satisfactory standard in relation to their scope of practice.**

E. **The student’s behaviour is disrupting other students, colleagues or people in the practice setting.**

F. **There is an increased risk of injury or misadventure involving the student or others.**

6.2 The Head of Program may also refer the student to the Head of School of Social Sciences who may initiate action under Ordinance 9 – Student Misconduct, Part 2. General Misconduct.

7 Glossary

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<td>Head of Program</td>
<td>Course Coordinator</td>
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<td>Organisational Unit</td>
<td>College of Arts, Law and Education</td>
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