



Recognition of Prior Learning

Social Work Field Education Information and Assessment 2025

Recognition of Prior Learning

Note: Applicable for only SWK3116

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is defined in the Australian Qualifications Framework (2012) as “an assessment of an individual’s relevant prior learning ... to determine the credit outcomes of an individual application for credit.”

In relation to Recognition of Prior Learning , the Australian Social Work Education Accreditation Standards (ASWEAS, 2024) state the following:

- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) can be used only for part or all of the first placement.
- The student must have worked for at least three full-time years in a setting deemed appropriate as a field education setting required for a first placement student and demonstrate competencies against AASW practice standards.
- At least the final year of the student’s work experience will be within three years of applying for RPL.

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) notes that all students seeking Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) should provide evidence that they have a sufficient basis of prior knowledge and skills ‘to achieve the course learning outcomes and the learning outcomes at the AQF level in the time specified’. To achieve this end:

- the student must provide a portfolio of evidence, to include duty statements accompanied by referee reports and a personal skills audit of their work
- experience to demonstrate how their knowledge, skills and professional insights align with the AASW Practice Standards and the Code of Ethics
- the portfolio must include a performance evaluation completed by the applicant for RPL to demonstrate a level of knowledge and skills consistent with those expected of a student at the end of first placement.
- The portfolio must be assessed by a social worker eligible for AASW membership.
- The social worker must:
 - have at least five years post-qualifying experience
 - be an experienced Field Educator who has assessed students on first placement
- The student must be interviewed by the Field Education Coordinator or Academic Unit Coordinator and one other staff member.

Accrediting body guidelines

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) provides the guidelines for educational institutions in relation to the delivery of social work courses (Bachelor, Masters etc). It is these guidelines (refer to text box on previous page) that all providers of social work courses are accredited under and therefore must be adhered to.

Rationale for Recognising RPL

The AASW recognises that it is the remit of the Higher Education Provider (HEP) as to whether RPL is offered. The Edith Cowan University social work program does provide opportunity for RPL, subject to the guidelines of both the AASW and ECU (as detailed in this manual and other relevant documentation) being met.

Recognition of Prior Learning is ONLY available for the first placement unit, being SWK3116. Full credit of 500 hour placement or partial credit of 250 hours (requiring a field placement of 250 hours to be undertaken) may be approved.

Important dates

Students wishing to apply for RPL for SWK3116 **first semester**, must submit their application by the **15th November** in the year prior to expected enrolment in the first field placement.

Students wishing to apply for RPL for SWK3116 **second semester**, must submit their application by the **15th March** in the same year that they would otherwise enrol in the first field placement.

Application Process

Prior to applying for RPL, all students must complete the Preliminary Checklist (refer appendix A) to ensure their eligibility for credit of the first Field Education Unit, SWK3116. The completed checklist must be submitted with your application.

All applications for RPL must take the form of a portfolio consisting of the following:

- Students are required to write a statement addressing how they have met each of the unit learning outcomes (ULOs) for SWK3116, Field Placement 1 through their formal work experience. To meet ASWEAS guidelines, it is a requirement that students refer to the AASW Code of Ethics and Practice Standards (all available on the AASW website) in each of the statements addressing the ULOs. There is a maximum word limit of 450 per ULO.

The learning outcomes are:

1. Apply social work practice skills in the context of an organisational and agency setting.
 2. Apply communication skills which are responsive to the interaction between person, situation and context within an agency and organisational setting.
 3. Appraise the legislative and policy context of the placement agency's work.
 4. Respond appropriately to ethical considerations that arise on placement, and feedback provided in supervision for professional development.
 5. Critique theoretical and empirical knowledge used in social work practice.
- A full resume (including a list of any other studies or professional development completed), detailing the position/s you are basing your application on. Details of the workload for each position (ie: full time or part time. If part time, detail number of hours per week) and equivalent social work skills and methods employed must be included. Maximum two (2) pages.
 - Formal duty statement/Job description for each of the positions on which your application is based.
 - Referee reports – one per practice setting using the template provided (refer appendix B).
 - A personal skills audit (refer appendix C)
 - Completed submission checklist (refer appendix D)

Submission of your application

1. Applicants must submit all documents electronically, including the RPL application form, via the [ECU Advance Standing process](#)
2. Students need to specify that the submission type is an application for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
3. Under the question 'What are the specific ECU units in your current course for which you would like to receive credit?' Click 'Add a unit' and search for SWK3116.
4. Within the 'Provide details of credit requested' text box, enter a basic outline of what is being requested (ie: RPL requested for SWK3116).
5. Upload supporting documents via the 'upload attachments' button. Your document **must be attached as one PDF** and cannot exceed 36mb. If your portfolio exceeds this limit, please review the limits on inclusions and condense your application. If your portfolio meets these limits or you are having difficulty uploading for alternative reasons, please contact Student Hub for assistance.
6. Complete the student acknowledgement and click 'submit assessment request'.

Assessment process – including interview

Once the application has been lodged electronically, it will be forwarded to the Field Education Coordinator for initial review. Subject to all documents being received, the application will progress to being fully reviewed by the Field Education Coordinator and one other social work program staff member.

The application will be assessed against a standard rubric (refer appendix E)

All applicants will be interviewed by the Field Education Coordinator and one other social work program staff member. The interview will take approximately 15 minutes. A date and time to be arranged by the Field Education Coordinator no more than fifteen (15) working days after submission of application.

Process for appeal

Any appeal to the decision made by the review panel must be lodged within 10 business days of the outcome and feedback being provided (via email).

The grounds of appeal must relate to failure in process or oversight of specific elements of portfolio material.

Appeals must be via email and sent to:

Social Work Course Coordinator
Dr Obed Adonteng-Kissi

o.adontengkissi@ecu.edu.au

The Course Coordinator will review the appeal and advise whether the original decision is to be upheld, or override the original decision providing clear evidence as to why.

The Course Coordinator will advise the Field Education Coordinator, who will in turn provide the outcome to the student as soon as practical.

Requirements for final placement

ASWEAS (2024) guidelines for subsequent placements for students granted RPL are as follows:

- A student who is approved for RPL must undertake a final placement in an organisation that provides onsite supervision by a qualified social worker with at least two years post-qualifying experience.
- The placement setting must be different from that of the student's work history and experience upon which RPL was based.

Who to Contact?

Should you have any questions with relation to an application for RPL, please contact:

Field Education Coordinator
Gemma Martin
gemma.martin@ecu.edu.au

APPENDIX A

Preliminary Checklist

	Yes	No
I have fully read and understood this Information and Application document.		
I have worked for at least three years (FTE equivalent) in a health or welfare setting that would be deemed appropriate as a field education setting for a first placement student.		
The final year (FTE) of my work experience in a suitable social work setting was in the past three years.		
Throughout my work experience I have undertaken a workload including tasks carried out by social workers, such as risk assessment, counselling, case management and community work.		
I can provide formal Duty Statements/Job Description Form/s on letterhead for the position/s I am basing my application on.		
I am in a position to submit an application by the due date and acknowledge that no late submissions will be accepted.		
My application will include a portfolio of evidence, to include duty statements (as mentioned above) accompanied by referee reports and a personal skills audit drawn from my work experience and evidenced.		
My portfolio will provide written evidence of my knowledge, skills and professional insights and how these align with the AASW Practice Standards and AASW Code of Ethics.		

If you have answered NO to any of the above, you are not eligible for Recognition of Prior Learning. Should you wish to discuss your options, please contact the Field Education Coordinator.

Referee Report

Professional Referee Details	
Full name:	
Phone number:	Email Address:
Position:	Organisation:
How long have you known the applicant?	
In what capacity do you know the applicant?	
Please provide details of any tertiary qualifications (Degree, year and institution):	
I have read the students application and can attest to the experience detailed: YES NO	
I declare that the information in this referee report is true and accurate: YES NO	
Referee report:	
<i>Could you please make comment on how the student has met the following Learning Outcomes.</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <i>Apply social work practice skills in the context of an organisational and agency setting.</i>2. <i>Apply communication skills which are responsive to the interaction between person, situation and context within an agency and organisational setting.</i>3. <i>Appraise the legislative and policy context of the placement agency's work.</i>4. <i>Respond appropriately to ethical considerations that arise on placement, and feedback provided in supervision for professional development.</i>5. <i>Critique theoretical and empirical knowledge used in social work practice.</i>	

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a signature.

Signature of referee:

Date:

Personal Skills Audit

PERSONAL SKILLS AUDIT (add and delete skills as required)			
Skill	Rating	Evidence (must be evident in addressing Unit Learning Outcomes)	LO #
Soft skills			
Listening			
Communicating			
Working in a team			
Working autonomously			
Emotional intelligence			
Time management			
Information technology			
Social work skills			
Assessment			
Advocacy			
Case management			
Counselling			
Community work/organising			
Interviewing			
Problem solving			
Relationship building			

Ratings			
(1) No current skill or knowledge			
(2) Some skill or knowledge, but not proficient			
(3) Competent at this skill and have knowledge			
(4) Expert with a high degree of skill and knowledge			

Submission checklist

Submission checklist	Yes	No
I have completed and will submit the preliminary checklist with my application.		
I have addressed each of the Unit Learning Outcomes (ULOs) for SWK3116, Field Placement 1.		
In addressing the ULOs, I have provided evidence of my knowledge, skills and professional insights and how these align with the AASW Code of Ethics and Practice Standards.		
I have obtained and will submit formal duty statements/Job descriptions.		
I have obtained and will submit referee reports for each of the practice settings using the template provided.		
I have completed and will submit a personal skills audit and linked this to the section in my portfolio where I have addressed the learning outcomes.		
I declare that all information and claims made in this application is true and correct.		
I acknowledge if not all required documentation is received, the application will be returned to not having been assessed.		

Signed:

Date:

RPL ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

Criteria	Not Capable / no evidence	Some Capability	Beginning capability	Capable	Highly Capable
Apply social work practice skills in the context of an organisational and agency setting					
Apply communication skills which are responsive to the interaction between person, situation and context within an agency and organisational setting.					
Appraise the legislative and policy context of the placement agency's work.					
Respond appropriately to ethical considerations that arise on placement, and feedback provided in supervision for professional development.					
Critique theoretical and empirical knowledge used in social work practice.					
Demonstrates understanding of the AASW Code of Ethics (2020) in relation to practice.					
Demonstrates understanding of AASW Practice Standards (2023) in relation to practice.					

Ranking Descriptions		
RATING	LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Capability not met	1	Performance not at basic level expected. Poor understanding of requirements. Practice unsafe or inappropriate. Knowledge or skills underdeveloped. Little application to learning. No capacity for development demonstrated.
Some capability	2	Performance not yet capable. Some requirements understood. Further work needed to demonstrate beginning capability.
Beginning capability	3 Pass	Performance at beginning level. Requirements understood. Practice capable under close guidance and supervision. Demonstrates some adaptability.
Capable	4	Performance beyond the level expected. Requirements integrated into practice. Can perform independently with supervision. Demonstrates adaptability and critical appreciation of own/others' practice with some guidance.
Unable to be assessed (This ranking should NOT be used to highlight performance issues and only applies in the first half of placement)	U/A	The work has either not been undertaken, an opportunity has not been available to the student, or the supervisor has not had an opportunity to assess capability in this area.

Reviewer checklist

Student Name:			
	Yes	No	Comment
All documentation received as per submission checklist			
Duty statements/Job description provides evidence of requirement for social work skills and knowledge			
Evidence provided confirming three (3) years full time equivalent experience with one (1) year full time equivalent in past three (3) years.			
Written/verbal referee report attests to applicant's social work skills, knowledge and ability.			
Personal Skills audit acceptable			
<p>I have reviewed the application for RPL. Based on information provided and assessment as per the rubric, I recommend the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student be granted full credit for the unit SWK3116 2. Student be granted partial credit for the unit SWK3116 3. Student's application for RPL not be approved <p>My reasons for this recommendation are:</p>			