5. Overarching Policies and Procedures

Practice Placement Policy

PRACTICE PLACEMENT POLICY
OPEN TRAINING COLLEGE

1. Introduction

The placement module is pivotal in facilitating students' transfer of their theoretical learning to practice and in enabling them to apply the knowledge, skills and abilities that they acquired throughout their studies to the work environment in a safe, supervised and structured way. Placement provides students with the real-life examples, experience and scenarios that will allow them to link theory to practice and facilitate their understanding and application of the key concepts, theories and competencies that they have learnt in their study to date. Throughout the practice placement, the student will be encouraged to both practise and become competent in the skills needed to be an effective worker who will meet professional Standards of Proficiency and whose practice will be grounded in the OTC's core principles of inclusion, empowerment, advocacy, person-centredness and the promotion of human rights.

By utilising the tripartite structure, the student will be facilitated in their learning by combining the knowledge of all three parties in the placement triad: the practice educator, the college faculty practice team and, centrally, the student themselves. Within this environment, the student will have an opportunity to identify their own learning objectives which are relevant and achievable. The student's learning will be overseen and facilitated by the practice educator in collaboration with the practice co-ordinator and the faculty practice team. Within this model of shared learning, the student will be able to practice their college-acquired knowledge in a real time education experience. Through planning, preparation, trial, reflection and guidance, learning will occur in a positive and encouraging environment where the student's learning is central, second only to service user needs and welfare.

Pre-requisites for placement:

- Garda Clearance
- Successful completion of all previous modules up to the point of placement
- Two mandatory workshop days, pre-placement
- Signed acceptance of stipulations in the Practice Placement Handbook, Student Handbook (incl. Code of Conduct), the Professional Code of Conduct adopted from IASCE and the CORU Code of Professional Conduct

- Pre-placement meeting with the Practice Educator
- Completion of all agency required pre-placement training

2. Purpose

To outline how the OTC complies with its educational, ethical, legal and professional obligations in respect of practice placements.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all students, prospective students, staff, stakeholders and suppliers of the Open Training College (OTC) who are involved with Practice Placements offered as part of OTC programmes.

To ensure that all placements are:

- ✓ Integral to the programme
- ✓ Allow the student to integrate theory and practice
- ✓ Facilitate the student's progressive development of the standards of proficiency (student allocation to placement must be based on this and the previous point)
- ✓ Are in a setting that reflects the normal context and environment for that practice
- ✓ Of a number, duration, range and placement within the programme that reflects current practice and the demands of the profession

To have clear requirements, guidelines, policies, protocols, processes and/or mechanisms in relation to (and to communicate them to all relevant stakeholders):

- ✓ The selection of practice placements
- ✓ Monitoring and approving of the quality of all practice placements
- ✓ Obtaining regular feedback from all relevant stakeholders
- ✓ The responsibilities of all parties
- ✓ Pre-placement requirements
- ✓ Procedures for non-compliance with the pre-placement requirements
- ✓ Practice placement attendance/completion of required hours
- ✓ Management of absence/non-attendance
- ✓ Student code of conduct
- ✓ How to manage breaches of this code
- ✓ Student fitness-to-practice
- ✓ Expectations of the practice placement
- ✓ Placement policies and procedures

- ✓ Guidelines on how students progress to independence in practice
- ✓ Support for practice educators in working with/managing students on placement, including students who may be in difficulty
- ✓ Return of assessments to the college
- ✓ Opportunities for students to raise any concerns they may encounter while on placement and supports for same
- ✓ Practice education assessments, their link to standards and the marking criteria used
- ✓ Practice education team need to have access to and training on the assessment tools and provision of feedback during the placement

To create clear, ongoing systems of communication with:

- ✓ Students
- ✓ Placement providers (to include clear governance structures); Practice Educator
- ✓ Faculty practice team

To provide clear, ongoing support and guidance to:

- ✓ Students
- ✓ Placement providers; Practice Educator (This will include training)
- ✓ Faculty practice team

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the accompanying "**Fitness to Practise**" policy and is intended to be used to respond to and manage concerns regarding a student's fitness to practise and/or professional suitability; collectively referred to herein as the 'overarching placement policies'.

4. Policy Statement

In order to ensure that the student has the best possible opportunity to maximise their learning while on placement, it is the College's policy to select high-quality placement settings that meet the College's standards and criteria for the selection of placement sites.

A standard set of "requirements for the selection of practice placements to ensure quality experiences for students that reflect the normal context and environment of practice", have been developed by Irish Association of Social Care Educators (IASCE) and approved by the Open Training College. "The education provider will work in partnership with the practice placement provider and have written agreements in place that clearly set out the responsibilities of all parties in ensuring that the placement supports the achievement of the standards of proficiency." (CORU, 2017; Criteria 2.4)

In order to maintain standards, the Open Training College will maintain "a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring the quality of all practice placements. Students, the practice education team, placement providers and all relevant stakeholders – including service users where appropriate – (must) have a role in this review process including mechanisms for obtaining regular feedback." (CORU, 2017, Criteria 2.5).

Students should demonstrate a commitment towards obtaining the core competencies/proficiencies for social care as outlined by CORU. Students should ensure compliance with the Social Care workers Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics as issued by CORU. A breach of the Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics may be deemed to be a breach of this policy.

This policy also provides for the following elements, which must be transparently specified for the benefit of all relevant stakeholders:

- Procedures: Before Placement, During Placement, At the End of Placement;
- Protocols: Covering eventualities which may arise in certain specified instances;
- Procedures for Review: Ad Hoc and Mandatory;
- Procedures for Garda Vetting;
- Terms of Reference for the Fitness to Practise Committee.

In the context of this policy, procedures are identified as being elements which will apply to all students/practice education team members at different stages of the placement process, whereas protocols will only apply in certain instances, where the named circumstance arises.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The College Director has ultimate executive responsibility for the effective development and implementation of academic policies. The Academic Affairs Manager has overall delegated responsibility for coordinating the day to day operation of the policies and the development, maintenance and monitoring of supporting procedures.

Course Director responsible for the academic management of the programme

Including provision of specialist presenters/lectures/guest speakers with relevant degree/master's degree and significant professional experience in adult teaching, working within health-related and community settings; expertise in social care area.

Practice Co-ordinator/Practice Education Team

The practice co-ordinator and the practice education team are designated to support the students in their transition to and experience of placement. The practice co-ordinator is the key link between all parties involved in the placement. The role of the practice co-ordinator and the practice education team will be:

- to liaise with Placement Providers in advance of placement and to seek approval for student placements;
- to provide placement agencies with relevant documentation and background information on the Placement process and CORU Professional Standards;
- to ensure that each placement location is an appropriate site for professional learning and skills development;
- to ensure that supervision by qualified personnel will be available and facilitated on a regular basis (a minimum of once every forty hours) for each student on placement;
- to liaise with the placement team regarding the overall placement process and allocation of places;
- to liaise with individual students and allocate them to an appropriate and suitable placement using best practice criteria for the stage of placement being undertaken;
- to co-ordinate the training and support available to Practice Educators;
- to co-ordinate the collection of periodic reviews from students and other relevant stakeholders (*incl. practice educators, placement agencies and service users) about each placement experience;
- to provide ongoing support to the student on placement;
- to assess the student while on placement.

Practice education team

The College's Practice Co-ordinator and Faculty Practice Team, along with the Practice Educator, have the responsibility to ensure that all students have an opportunity to achieve all relevant standards of proficiency while on placement. All members must have experience in the context and the ability to register as a practitioner or educator; including the joint responsibility to oversee the social care practice modules and placement.

In addition, as with all OTC programmes, the programme team will be supported by:

- College Director

- Assistant College Director

- Manager of Academic Affairs

- Other Teaching Staff including Course Director, Course Faculty, Associate Faculty

- Head of Online Learning

- Corporate Service Manager

- Administration Team including College Administrator, Assessment Co-ordinator and Quality Co-ordinator

- IT Support Team

6. Definitions

Adequately resourced: Refers to physical resources and human resources; including the availability of a named practice educator with the appropriate qualification and three years' post qualification experience that would meet the criteria to register as a social care worker.

The Agency/ Placement Provider: …must be involved in social care practice. i.e. "Plan and provide professional care to vulnerable individuals and groups of all ages who experience marginalisation, disadvantage or special needs." (www.socialcareireland.ie)

The placement provider signs the placement agreement.

Course Director: The person with overall academic responsibility for the programme, in which the practical placements are embedded. The Course Director is also a member of the Faculty Practice Team and may have further responsibilities with regard to placement, as designated by the practice Co-ordinator.

Faculty Practice Team: Members of the internal College practice education team who have direct or designated (by the Practice Co-ordinator) responsibility with regard to students on placement. They must be 'registerable' (as a practitioner or an educator) with CORU's Social Care Workers registration board in advance of the register opening and fully registered within a year of the opening of the register. The faculty practice team includes the Course Director.

Failure of Practice Placement: Students will be considered to have unsuccessfully attempted a practice placement module where they have been awarded an F grade at a final exam board meeting. Students will be afforded **one** opportunity to repeat each practice placement.

Placement Agreement: An agreement signed between the Open Training College and the placement provider/ agency. This will be signed by the College's Practice Co-ordinator and host agency senior manager (Director of Services/HR Manager/Training Manager). Not until the Placement Agreement is complete is the placement confirmed.

Practice Co-ordinator: The College's core liaison person and manager with regard to the tripartite structure. The practice co-ordinator acts as the main link between the College and the student on placement and between the College and the placement provider. S/he has the overall operational responsibility for the operationalisation of the policies and procedures relevant to the placement elements of a programme and to the full implementation of the tripartite requirements. The practice co-ordinator may delegate certain responsibilities to members of the Faculty Practice Team.

Practice Education Team: People who are responsible for a student's education during the period of practical placement. This includes the Practice Educator (on site at the Placement Provider), the Practice Co-ordinator and the Faculty Practice team (incl. the Course Director). All members of the practice education team must be 'registerable' (as a practitioner or an educator) with CORU's Social Care Workers registration board in advance of the register opening and fully registered within a year of the opening of the register.

Practice Educator: The person assigned responsibility for guiding, supervising and working with the student on placement and for contributing to the realisation of the student achieving the standards of proficiency. They must be engaged in the practice of social care work and be eligible for registration with CORU. Practice educators will be made aware that once registration opens there is an expectation that they will submit their CORU registration number to the College as evidence that they continue to meet the criteria to act as a practice educator.

Student on Placement/Student Practitioner: A student who has met the prerequisites for placement and who is considered 'fit to practise'. The student works with the Practice Educator and Practice Co-ordinator/Faculty Practice Team in order to achieve the standards of proficiency set out by CORU, while on placement.

Standards of Proficiency: The threshold skills and abilities required for entry to the Social Care Workers' register.

7. Related Documentation

This policy should be read in conjunction with *Practice Placement Procedures & Protocols* and OTC's

Fitness to Practise policy (Adapted and adopted from IASCE's policy).

8. Contacts

The Academic Affairs Manager/Course Director/ Practice Co-ordinator/Practice Educator

Policy Title:	Practice Placement
OTC Policy No	1901
Version	1.0
Date approved: February 2019 / **Date policy will take effect:** September 2019	**Date of Next Review:** Annual
Approving Authority:	Academic Council
Document Owner/Contact:	Academic Affairs Manager
Supporting documents & procedures of this policy:	Student Garda Vetting Procedure Student/Practice Educator Placement Handbook Online Practice Educator training resources Approved/certified Practice Educator training College contact details i.e. College Practice Coordinator email, College phone contact number, contact details of relevant members of the College Education Team Minutes of meeting with Student pre-placement - Assigned college educator and his/her contact details - College code of conduct - schedule of hours, duties/tasks, role description - Scheduled tripartite between a member of the Faculty Practice Team, Student and Practice Educator

	Circumstances in which the student should contact Faculty Practice Team outside of tripartite meetings
	Procedure in the event of issues arising during placement e.g.
	-fitness to practice issues
	-illness/absence of student
	-Illness/absence of Practice Educator
	-Issues in the agency affecting their ability to provide placement
	Schedule of tripartite meetings between a member of the Faculty Practice Team, Practice Educator and Student
	Contact details for student(s) taking up placement and agreed start time, placement schedule of hours/times, broad outline of tasks/duties
	OTC QuAD (current published version): Complaints and Disciplinary Policies and Procedures.
	Programme Student Handbook to be read in conjunction with the Placement Handbook(for Students, Practice Educators and Faculty Practice Team).
	Student E-portfolio
Audience:	Public – accessible to anyone
Reference(s)	- OTC Fitness to Practise Policy
	- www.socialcareireland.ie
	- CORU's Criteria 2.2 on Practice Placements
	- CORU's Standards of Proficiency for SCWs

	- IASCE, Placement Assessment Guidelines, 2018 - OTC's core principles of inclusion, empowerment, advocacy and the promotion of human rights. - Social Care Workers Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics as drafted by CORU - The IASCE Fitness to Practise Policy - Social Care Workers Registration Board: Criteria for Education and Training Programmes - Guidelines for Programme Providers
Forms	- Site visit feedback form - Placement preference/enquiry form - Placement Agreement - Learning plan - Mid-placement review form - Action Plan - Student Activity Log (part of e-portfolio) - Time sheets - Practice Educator Form - Student e-portfolio - Practice-Based Learning Forms - Communication Matrix to record and explore examples of the student's communication and collaboration with the relevant stakeholders while on placement - Minutes of Practice Coordinator/Practice Educator meeting *Assessment Record Book: Professional Practice Placement Year 2* and *Assessment Record Book: Professional Practice Placement Year 3 (incl. mid-placement review from).*