

## Fitness to Practice in Practicum Placements Guidelines and Procedures

### 1. Definitions

In this document the following definitions apply:

“Academic Registrar” means the person appointed to this position or a person acting in that position or his or her nominee.

“Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning)” means the Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) of the School of Education or a person acting in that position;

“Associate Dean (Discipline)” means an Associate Dean (Discipline) of the School of Education or a person acting in that position;

“business day” means a day on which the University is open to the public for normal business operations;

“course” or “courses” means a course leading to entry to practice as a teacher where completion is required for professional registration with the Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia.

“Course Co-ordinator” means the person appointed to the role of course coordinator in the School of Education or alternative staff member nominated by the Dean;

“Dean” means the Executive Dean of the School Education;

“Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)” means the person appointed to this position or a person acting in that position or his or her nominee;

“impairment” has the meaning given to the term under the National Law and includes a physical or mental impairment, disability, condition or disorder (including substance abuse or dependence) that detrimentally affects or is likely to detrimentally affect a student’s capacity to undertake practicum experience;

“inherent requirements” means the requirements of a course that are inherent or essential to the nature of that course and are described in further detail in the Inherent Requirement Document at Appendix A;

“Practicum Co-ordinator” means the academic coordinator responsible for arranging practicum placements.

“practicum placement” means a work based experience in a school or early childhood setting that is required as part of a unit where the student undertakes practicum experience;

“reporting person” means the person reporting concerns that the student may not be able to meet the inherent requirements of their course;

“TRB” means the Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia; and

“Unit Co-ordinator” means the staff member designated as unit co-ordinator for a unit.

## 2. Rationale

These Guidelines and Procedures describe the process to be followed when concerns are raised regarding a student's ability to meet the inherent requirements of a course. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to academic staff and students, to ensure appropriate support for students and to safeguard the safety of the public.

Edith Cowan University, School of Education is committed to supporting the rights of all people who wish to pursue a career in teaching and early childhood education. Inherent Requirement Statements have been developed to identify the essential abilities, knowledge and skills needed to achieve the core learning outcomes of the courses required, and practicum placements undertaken, as a student teacher in preparation for entry (registration) into the teaching and early childhood professions.

Education courses include substantial work based placements in which students are exposed to practicum practice within schools and early childhood settings. All students must confirm that they meet the inherent requirements before they undertake a practicum placement.

Students with a disability or chronic health condition may be able to have reasonable adjustments made to teaching and learning, assessment, practicum practice and other activities to enable them to participate in their course and meet the inherent requirements. However, reasonable adjustments should not fundamentally change the nature of inherent requirements.

## 3. Information to applicants and students

Information about the inherent requirements (Appendix A) will be available to potential applicants to the Education courses on the ECU website and in the course handbook. Prospective students will be required to confirm that they have read and understood these as part of the enrolment process. At this juncture students seeking to enrol in a course will also be signposted to the Equity and Diversity and Disability Services.

All students enrolled in courses will be advised of their obligations under the University Rules and policies and School of Education procedures associated with work based experiences through lectures, tutorials and practicum unit Blackboard sites. All students will be asked to confirm their ongoing ability to meet the inherent requirements prior to the allocation of practicum placements.

## 4. Equity, Diversity and Disability Services support

Students with a disability or medical condition who may require reasonable adjustments may be eligible for a Learning and Assessment Plan, developed in conjunction with the Equity, Diversity and Disability Service. This document will propose reasonable adjustments that can be made to assist the students to achieve the relevant course's inherent requirements and course learning outcomes. The provision of a Learning and Assessment Plan, however, should not be construed as a determination by the University that the student can meet the inherent requirements of their course. The reasonable adjustments proposed in the Learning and Assessment Plan may also be subject to further amendment if the School of Education considers the adjustments proposed are inconsistent with the inherent requirements of the relevant course or practicum placement.

## 5. Fitness to Practice Procedure

### Introduction

The following procedure must be initiated when concerns are raised regarding a student's ability to meet the inherent requirements of the course and thereby demonstrate fitness to practice in a practicum placement.

It is essential that any concerns of this nature are properly investigated. Students who are not fit to practice during a practicum placement may pose a risk to students and children, school and early childhood centre host staff, wider school or centre communities, ECU staff and other students. The University shall carry out the procedure described below in a manner that is as timely and discreet as reasonably practicable and provides procedural fairness for students who are the subject of investigations. All information collected by School of Education personnel as part of the procedure described below shall be retained and processed in a manner that is consistent with the University's Privacy Policy.

The following circumstances are examples which could raise doubts about a student's ability to meet one or more of inherent requirements and potentially cause a student to be unfit to practice during a practicum placement. They are illustrative only and are not intended to be exhaustive;

- i. Evidence of chronic drug or alcohol misuse;
- ii. Severe mental illness;
- iii. Acting in a violent or aggressive manner;
- iv. Intimidation of students and children, placement host mentors, ECU staff and fellow students;
- v. Fraudulent or dishonest behaviour;
- vi. Failure to rectify behaviour that has been subject to a finding of General Misconduct under the provisions of the ECU General Misconduct Rules (Students);
- vii. Failure to comply with legislative and regulatory pre-requisites to practicum placements; and
- viii. Conviction of a criminal offence, including any spent convictions (in line with TRB considerations).

Concerns about a student's ability to meet the inherent requirements of the course and demonstrate fitness to practice on a practicum placement should be reported to the Academic Practicum Co-ordinator. Concerns may be reported by students, peers, academic staff, family members, practicum supervisors or practicum staff. Concerns can be reported about a student enrolled in a course even if they have not yet enrolled in a unit containing a practicum placement.

A report of concerns about a student's ability to meet the inherent requirements of a course must be made in good faith. Action under the provisions of the University's General Misconduct Rules (Students) may be taken against an enrolled ECU student who is alleged to have made a frivolous or vexatious report.

### Step 1 – Course Co-ordinator Investigation

If after preliminary consideration of a report the Course Co-ordinator is satisfied that the concerns raised are not frivolous and vexatious, the Course Co-ordinator will investigate those concerns. If the relevant student is on practicum placement, arrangements may be made to postpone the student's practicum placement to allow time for the concerns to be investigated. In such circumstances, the

Course Co-ordinator will inform the Practicum and Unit Co-ordinators of the investigation on confidential basis.

The investigation initiated by the Course Co-ordinator must include but is not necessarily limited to, the following steps;

- i. A meeting with the reporting person.
- ii. Following that meeting, the preparation of a written statement describing the reporting person's concerns and receiving confirmation from the reporting person that the statement is an accurate description of their concerns.
- iii. Prior to any meeting with the student who is the subject of the reported concerns, giving the student details of the statement made under (ii) and, if applicable, details any other statements obtained through the investigation process described above.
- iv. Inviting the student to a meeting, providing at least five business days' notice, at which the Course Co-ordinator may seek further information or clarification regarding matters described in the written statement(s) given to the student.
- v. Permitting the student to be accompanied to the meeting by a support person ("the accompanying person") provided that the accompanying person is not a legal practitioner. The accompanying person may not participate in the meeting without the permission of the Course Co-ordinator.
- vi. Providing the student at that meeting with the opportunity to respond in writing or orally to the matters described in the written statement(s) or any questions put or comments made by the Course Co-ordinator and to present any information or evidence considered relevant by the student.

At the conclusion of the meeting referred to at (iv) above, the Course Co-ordinator may, give the student information about the services available at the ECU Counselling Service and the Equity, Diversity and Disability Services.

After conducting the initial investigation, the Course Co-ordinator may decide no further action is necessary because the information gathered confirms that the student meets the inherent requirements of their course or will be able to meet the inherent requirements with reasonable adjustments. Alternatively, the Course Co-ordinator may decide that further evidence is necessary.

### **Step 2 – Request for further evidence**

Where the Course Co-ordinator decides that further evidence is necessary, the Course Co-ordinator must invite the student to provide within five business days (or such longer period as may be approved by the Course Co-ordinator) a report from a relevant medical professional or other suitably qualified person regarding the student's ability to meet the inherent requirements. A template form has been developed by the School of Education for this purpose (Appendix B).

The student may elect to not produce any evidence, including the designated medical report. If the student declines to provide evidence, the School of Education shall not draw any adverse inference from the student's decision in this regard and it shall proceed to make its determination based on the information before it.

### Step 3 – Panel Assessment

If, after carrying out the steps referred to in Steps 1 and 2, the Course Co-ordinator believes that the available evidence does not confirm that the student meets the inherent requirements of the course or is able to meet them with reasonable adjustments, the Course Co-ordinator will report on the matter to the Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning).

The Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) will convene and chair a panel consisting of the Associate Dean (Discipline) and one or more of the other Associate Deans and/or Professors of the University to review the evidence including the Course Co-ordinator's report and any available relevant information.

Once convened, the panel will provide the student with details of the Course Co-ordinator's report and details of any other documents provided by the Course-Co-ordinator to the student. Once this information has been forwarded to the student the panel shall carry out the following steps:

- i. with not less than three business days' notice, invite the student to attend a meeting(s) conducted to consider the evidence presented to it (other than a meeting at which the panel deliberates on the evidence);
- ii. when issuing the invitation referred to at (i), inform the student that they may appoint another person, other than a legal practitioner, to accompany or assist them at any of their meeting(s) with the panel and address the panel on the student's behalf; and
- iii. invite the student to adduce further evidence or make a statement in relation to the reporting person's concerns and/or the Course Co-ordinator's report.

The panel must not take into consideration any documents or other forms of evidence if the substance of those documents and evidence has not been disclosed to the student.

If the student fails to attend a meeting to which they have been invited, the panel may decide to conduct its business in the student's absence.

The panel will report its conclusion(s) and make a recommendation in writing to the Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) within five business days of its final meeting and simultaneously provide full details of the report to the student.

### Step 4 Referral of matter to Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning)

Before making a decision, the Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) must invite the student to make a written submission addressing the panel's conclusion(s) and recommendation(s) within three business days of the panel's report being provided to the Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning).

After considering the panel's report and any submission made by the student and within fifteen business days of receiving panel's report the Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) may do one or more of the following:

- i. permit the student to undertake practicum placements;
- ii. permit the student to undertake practicum placements subject to certain specified conditions; or
- iii. if the student is enrolled in a unit involving a practicum placement, refer the matter of the student's enrolment to the Academic Registrar and postpone the student's participation, or further participation, in a practicum placement while the Academic Registrar considers the student's enrolment in the relevant unit.

## 6. Unit Result Appeal

A student receiving a grade of Fail in a unit as a consequence of being prevented from participating in a practicum placement because of an investigation into concerns about their ability to meet or a decision that they cannot meet the inherent requirements of a course, may appeal against that result under the provisions of 8.1 of the Admission, Enrolment and Academic Progress Rules.

## 7. ECU related policies, Rules and procedures

General Misconduct Rules (Students)

Admission, Enrolment and Academic Progress Rules

ECU Work Health and Safety

[http://www.ecu.edu.au/GPPS/policies\\_db/policies\\_view.php?rec\\_id=0000000188](http://www.ecu.edu.au/GPPS/policies_db/policies_view.php?rec_id=0000000188)

[ECU Privacy Policy](#)

[http://www.ecu.edu.au/GPPS/policies\\_db/policies\\_view.php?rec\\_id=0000000335](http://www.ecu.edu.au/GPPS/policies_db/policies_view.php?rec_id=0000000335)

[ECU Work Integrated Learning \(WIL\) Policy](#)

[http://www.ecu.edu.au/GPPS/policies\\_db/policies\\_view.php?rec\\_id=0000000406](http://www.ecu.edu.au/GPPS/policies_db/policies_view.php?rec_id=0000000406)

[http://intranet.ecu.edu.au/\\_data/assets/word\\_doc/0009/483615/Roles-and-Responsibilities-for-Work-Integrated-Learning.docx](http://intranet.ecu.edu.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0009/483615/Roles-and-Responsibilities-for-Work-Integrated-Learning.docx)

[http://intranet.ecu.edu.au/\\_data/assets/word\\_doc/0007/563533/WIL-Students-Risk-Management-Responsibilities-131010.docx](http://intranet.ecu.edu.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0007/563533/WIL-Students-Risk-Management-Responsibilities-131010.docx)