Planning and implementing a Social Work in Schools (SWiS) Placement

Comprehensive phases and principles in establishing a sustainable placement in a NSW school site

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Forward

The following handbook is designed to establish social work field education placements in a NSW school setting. It is intended to provide information and guidance for university staff and school staff, as well as social work supervisors who will be supervising social work students.

Social workers have an extensive history of working in schools across the world in order to provide support to school students and families in addressing the social determinants of health which impact on learning and educational outcomes. Social workers bring complimentary skills and knowledge to support existing school staff including wellbeing teams, counsellors, and teachers. Social work students undertaking a placement in a school have the opportunity to experience a variety of roles in which to further grow and develop their social work skills.

This handbook is mainly targeted toward University Field Education staff, as well as school principals, deputies and head wellbeing staff. The content can be used as a springboard for initiating helpful discussions between schools and universities with regards to how to establish and structure a social work field education placement. Staff at the university of New England (UNE), where this program has been implemented very successfully, have titled such placements ‘Social Work in Schools (SWiS) placements’. This placement option is embedded within the overall UNE field education program for all students to engage with if they wish to do so.

Universities are encouraged to use this handbook to fit their unique university Field Education structures. This model has been very successful in both rural and metropolitan applications to date. Please notify us whenever you use the content of this handbook; see Communication and Contact details page 8.

Scott Gartshore (Social Work in Schools Officer)
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Introduction

The Social Work in Schools (SWiS) program is well established in the Hunter New England Region of NSW, close to the University of New England (UNE) Armidale campus. Six potential school sites were identified, and established as our priority schools in the fieldwork program from 2015. The principles and steps listed in this handbook outline the approach taken, with positive results. Our potential school sites are in rural and remote areas of New South Wales at: Coonamble High School, Moree Secondary College, Armidale High School, Nambucca Heads High School, Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School, and Gunnedah High School. We anticipated that supporting these remote schools will continue to show the long-term benefits of the SWiS program as school students gain the support they need, which may improve their higher educational outcomes. One lasting potential outcome is to re-introduce the Social Work profession back into NSW state schools. Once re-established in the school setting, student supervision could then be conducted by qualified school social workers.

It is anticipated that partnering with other universities would continue to establish and supply social work students as a priority to these sites. This in turn enables the site to be sustainable, with back-to-back social work student presence. Some accommodation for students relocating is covered in part or full, and students immersing themselves in the school community reap the benefits during their placement.

Initially a full time paid staff member instigated and oversaw the entire process of these schools, involving many hours of extra visits and contact phone calls. In Coonamble for example, university staff roles facilitated an equally important role of community capacity building, and other school and university collaboration. However, in order to help facilitate a more sustainable model,
minimum steps and principles needed to be further embedded for fieldwork staff. This handbook outlines the minimum contact required to establish a placement with a long-standing, sustainable presence in mind. We have found that a long-standing, consistent university student presence produces the best outcomes. This means a single, isolated placement, even though successful and without negative incident, is not as effective as consecutive placements over the school years. Therefore school site location is a very important factor to establish from the outset.

Schools and universities alike should use this document as a guide and adapt to their local settings and unique situations. It is used in the initial establishment of a school site for placement.

**Resource**

This is the first handbook in this series. Further helpful information can be found in the second handbook in this series “A Field Education Handbook for Social Work in Schools (SWiS) Placements: a handbook for supervisors and social work students undertaking placements in a school”.

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Laying the foundation for a social work field placement in a school setting

Select your school site

Firstly, locate a school setting that is likely to be sustainable. Sustainable in this instance means that you as a university are likely to place further social work students at the same school site for the foreseeable future. This is a long-term commitment and best results occur from having consecutive students, or back-to-back students in the school. Isolated placements are not recommended. Does this mean you only approach schools close to your university campus? In our case at the University of New England (UNE), no. But it may mean this in your case. It is a case-by-case scenario. The following social work definitions may help to shed light on the reason for our approach to social work in school field education placements.

Definitions of Social Work

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.” (International Federation of Social Work, 2015)

“The school social work role is unique in its approach as it focuses on the student in the school environment in order to facilitate successful learning outcomes through the relief of distress, the removal of barriers or inequities, and the development of safe and inclusive schools and communities. School social work is a vast area of practice that responds to the needs of the student population and school community.”
Most importantly, in their commitment to human rights and social justice, school social workers advocate for the rights of students against the discrimination and reduced opportunities they can sometimes experience.” (AASW Scope of School Social work, 2015. P.3)

These definitions highlight the importance of social work principles including: social justice, human rights, engaging people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing, in both schools and the communities within which they are located. UNE has a rural focus as a rural University; therefore we approached rural and remote schools (listed previously). We have established a model that positively impacts both school and local community, bringing them together to best facilitate successful learning outcomes through positive well-being, and the removal of barriers or inequities. Thus, the social work principles above are fulfilled in rural areas. This is not to say that the same principles are not in need of addressing in metropolitan schools.

At UNE we wanted to make a positive difference to rural and disadvantaged schools. Schools were required to meet the following criteria: located in a rural area; have a high number of students from low Socio-Economic Status backgrounds; and Significant Aboriginal student enrolment. More recent expansion of the program into Sydney’s South West, Western suburbs, and Wollongong areas, has meant that some schools have a high enrolment of school students from a refugee background, and parents with English as a second language.
Timeframe to establish a school

As stated earlier, a great deal of work is to be undertaken in establishing a SWiS placement. Initially UNE staff visited each school site, sometimes monthly in building rapport with school and staff. At times we met with staff 2-3 times to discuss the program further and answer questions. These times were very important in establishing relationships with school staff; after all, a partnership is not built overnight. It is recommended that this timeframe not drag out too long, but also give enough time for all involved to form a mutual understanding, and allow time for school and university team meeting processes to function well. During these meetings questions may be raised, and answers devised that can be shared at the next meeting. Both educational institutions involved are very busy and adding pressure to rush a placement through may adversely impact upon the social work student, and the sustainability of the site. This would be unethical for all involved. So how long should it take to establish a school placement? How long is a piece of string? Each school is its own entity and has its own culture. Many school staff values may help with the implementation, or hinder it. There is no ‘set’ timeframe because there are so many variables. See the following principles.

Log the details of the school

After selecting a school site, log the details of the school via their website. Generally you can find out a lot about the school from their website. Next contact the school either by email or phone. Note that your first contact will be with school administration staff. It is best to avoid the busiest times of the day, around 8:30-9:30am and then 2:30-3:30pm. The aim of your conversation is to identify your best contact in the school: the principal, deputy principle, or head wellbeing teacher. You may get to choose from some, or all of these, very busy
people. We have found it best to have just one contact in the school. The reason for this is that if you have two or more contacts, some of the information may not be passed to everyone. This in turn leaves gaps in understanding of how the program might work and be implemented.

With one contact identified in the school you are now able to make an appointment with them. Admin staff may be able to do this via their calendar; other schools prefer the ‘contact’ person to make their own appointments. However it works in the school, you are now ready to call and speak with them over the phone briefly about the SWiS program. This initial contact is to just start the conversation, gauge their interest, whet their appetite in order to establish a meeting time to actually speak more fully about SWiS in person. Make an appointment and send a calendar invite. Ideally this should be a one-hour meeting, however this may be difficult to secure. At the same time we email a document entitled “SWiS”. (See appendix for an example). This document lists in bullet form the most frequently asked questions about the program. By emailing this we can explain a little more about the program, and ask this key contact to distribute the document to other relevant staff.

**Initial face-to-face meeting**

Your meeting may be the next day, the next week, or even further away. Regardless, it is important to keep the SWiS program in the mind of your school contact. We do this because, as your contact goes about their daily school routine, they may be prompted to consider how a SWiS might help with some of the struggles their school faces.
Schools are busy places, so a follow-up email confirming the time and date of the meeting is advised, and then again 24 hours previous to the arranged time. Again, this keeps the SWiS program in school’s mind.

The initial meeting is best conducted face-to-face because dealing with a real person unveils body language and allows you to have a presence in the school. During this initial meeting you are promoting a program, but more importantly you are building a partnership. The importance of this time for rapport building cannot be underestimated. Your contact may take your ideas on-board, or refuse to take them any further. Don’t rush this time; establish good rapport for a long-standing partnership.

Ideally your conversation is to be open and friendly, but advising of how the SWiS program may assist the school. Therefore, it is important to attend this meeting with information about the school (both positive and not so positive) to show that you are aware of how this particular school functions. Each school has its own unique way of doing and saying things. Equally important is asking questions about the school to establish what some of the overarching themes might be. For example: how diverse are the ethnic cultures that attend the school? What place does sport play in the school? How many staff make up the wellbeing team? Are there Student Support Officers? Try to build an overall picture of the school and consider possibly where a SWiS student might make a difference. We have found it best to walk through the school property for a short while, asking staff to showcase their site and grounds. Toward the end, after you have learnt more of the school’s unique elements, you can then remind them of the UNE’s "FAQ" and work through their questions. These Frequently Asked Questions have been produced as prompts to discuss more deeply where a SWiS may assist, and follow on from the conversations you have been having. Below are further examples that you may wish to suggest to your contact.
I admit this may sound very 'salesman' like, but you are showing this person that you have a product that has shown to make a positive difference in other schools, and generally speaking, schools are open to programs that are cost effective and have good results. SWiS is just that. It costs the school nothing financially apart from supplying a desk or office space, some furniture and an email address/school login. However, many schools are now offering much more as the program is further established in the school. It is important to remember that this is a long-term, sustainable partnership. We are not going to 'fix' everything in any school with one social work student; indeed, that is not the ideal. We are not 'fixers'. We are supplying the school with a student who will learn how to apply social work theories and knowledge within this school setting. Therefore, ensure your contact that the social work student is just that; a student. They will be learning in the school setting and are not there to 'fix' their broken system. However, when promoting the following three main roles the student can play, emphasis the strength and scope of a social work student in potentially addressing distress and assisting some school students toward higher educational outcomes. You can only do that effectively by listening with interest to your contact as they talk about their school.

**Three main roles for a Social Work Student**

The following three main areas cover the scope of social work in a school setting. Each school has established their allowances and boundaries for students. Some schools allow more face-to-face than others, while others have more of a focus on group-work. There is no one-way of designing the perfect SWiS placement, because each consecutive placement will have a different student with different gifts and abilities. These three areas are taken directly
from the next handbook on how to facilitate a SWiS placement and they are in no set order.

1. Face-to-face

Much of social work practice within a school setting is face-to-face contact, relationship building and supporting school students. School students may self-refer to the social work student, be referred by well-being or learning support staff, counsellor, Deputy Principal or Principal. Such school students may be visibly upset after an isolated incident, or they may already be well known to school staff as often distressed, or fall on the continuum anywhere between these two scenarios. We hope that SWiS students are able to access school students one-on-one in a confidential manner, in order to provide adequate support and develop intervention skills. All school risk assessments and protocols need to be followed. The SWiS student may also ‘shadow’ the school counsellor or other appropriate staff where appropriate, to further develop skills. Much of this face-to-face role can be assisting anxious or disengaged school students to understand what they are feeling, and suggest strategies to self-regulate such feelings. Below are some examples of activities in which SWiS students may engage, within the school.

Playground presence

Lunch and recess times are great opportunities for SWiS students to be ‘out and visible’ in the school grounds. They may be able to shadow staff in the playground and assist with school student incidents. We advise that this role be negotiated between the SWiS student and school task supervisor early in the placement. SWiS students engaged in playground presence do not need to be accompanied by a school staff member. We recommend that this activity not be seen as playground duty unless clearly articulated with instructions for the SWiS student, who will also require a school staff member with them. Whilst engaged
in playground presence the SWiS student may spend time in informal face-to-face conversations with school students.

**Case management**

Engaging with school students on an individual basis might require case management. Ensure that your caseload is realistic in number and complexity (generally low level such as managing anxiety, anger, social skills, disengaged school students, classroom observations, or assisting in class with re-engagement), and that you work toward positive termination of the intervention, and school student empowerment.

In case managing a school student the social work student needs to consider undertaking a bio psychosocial (BPSS) assessment (*examples provided in the second Handbook in this series* Gartshore, Scott. (2017) *A Field Education Handbook for Social Work in School (SWiS) Placements: For supervisors and social work students undertaking a placement in a school setting*. © University of New England, Armidale NSW. Released under Creative Commons: CC BY-SA 4.0 [http://dx.doi.org/10.4226/95/5a027e2193330](http://dx.doi.org/10.4226/95/5a027e2193330)).

BPSS work may be conducted formally in an office setting, or informally; for example, during playground presence or classroom observations. Referrals for individual casework may come from a welfare/wellbeing meeting, directly from your task supervisor, learning and support meeting, or self-referral from a school student. Please check with your school process. You may need to obtain parent/caregiver consent (definitely in a primary school) and will possibly need to involve the school student’s wider school and home environment (family and teachers).

Keep case notes of your interaction with school students. Example case note templates are provided in the second Handbook (link provided above). Ask the school where the files/case notes can be kept so that confidentiality is maintained according to the AASW code of ethics. Furthermore, file/case notes are to be filed with the school counselor’s files. If keeping electronic copies, these need to be printed and handed to the school counselor. You, as a social work student are not a DET employee, and are not given direct access to these files. You will find that counselling skills may also be needed in case managing individual school students.
****It is essential that these case notes/files are deleted and/or shredded prior to leaving the placement, according to your school procedure.

**Accidental Counsellor**

You are not a qualified counsellor and must remain under the supervision and direction of the school. However, in this role you may become a ‘go to’ person in the school who may be able to free up some well-being staff with ‘low level’ school students who just need a listening ear. Individual direct practice skills are a core social work skill-set used when engaging with people, in order to establish rapport or knowledge of how best to assist them. Face-to-face skills enable the sharing of current distress or need. At times, simply sharing how school students feel can be beneficial in getting a different perspective, and may enable a student to re-engage with learning once back in the classroom. This role may require you to assist with calming school students who are visibly upset, experiencing anxiety or depressive symptoms, encouraging those who are feeling disconnected from education or peers, working alongside ‘gifted’ school students in balancing sport/school or music/school balance, supporting bullying incidents and social interactions between school students, or home issues such as mental health or changing family dynamics. Referral processes may be formal or informal, depending on the situation. Informal referrals might include school students seeking support through the careers counsellor to discuss future elective options or alternate pathways. Formal referrals might include a school student being supported with the school counsellor. Whenever you, as a social work student, believe or feel you are ‘out of your depth’ you must refer the matter to another staff member, and then seek support for yourself.

**Classroom Behavioural Observations**

Classroom observations consist of observing school students’ behaviours in differing classroom situations, then possibly developing strategies while liaising with teachers and the wellbeing team to enable school students to ‘stay in the
Welfare assessments with individual school students may be part of this role in identifying trends of behaviours either with subjects, peers or staff. Additionally, you may be needed to speak with school students who are sent out of classrooms, or who may be referred to you by other staff or the deputy. Occasionally some school students experience distress with which they simply cannot cope, and they ‘skip’ class or school altogether. The SWiS may be able to speak with school students who are ‘wandering’ out of class without valid reason, and may provide a form of duty of care and a listening ear, which gives the school student an alternate support other than a teacher. The aims of these observations and interactions are to understand the school student’s experience and support them to move back into the classroom to learn more effectively.

(Reproducible example resources can be found in the second Handbook)

2. Group work

Group work in schools is usually goal oriented with a specific purpose in mind. Task Supervisors will usually have an idea of the group of school students with whom they would like you to work, and of the issues that need to be addressed. Some schools may even have a group-work program in mind to deal with these issues. Some social work students may be asked to develop a program or find an existing program to run. Some ideas have been provided below.

Group work is a core social work skill. Groups could be from a variety of perspectives in which education may be an aim, or treatment as in working with school students developing anxiety coping strategies. Most group work includes social skills and interaction development. Group work may meet a perceived need for which the school has not had an available staff member to address - SWiS students may be beneficial in commencing a new group. Groups could be a small cohort of 3-4 or larger 6-8. We strongly advise that planning for group work should commence early in the placement. Please make the school’s
process available (if there is one) to assist social work students in navigating your school structure. For example, is parent consent required? Who might have a template of a parent/guardian permission letter? What are the steps for this entire process which can take weeks to organise? For those not familiar with the school structure, this process can be overwhelming and confusing.

Group work may not be limited to school students. Opportunities may arise to run a group for parents or carers on an identified topic. Groups might occur as a 'one off' workshop, or over a few sessions or periods. They might also run for a whole term once or twice per week, depending on need. Further examples are:

- Early intervention for groups for school students before they appear on 'crisis' radars; i.e. when problem behaviours start to show (maybe as a result of classroom observations).
- Post-intervention groups for school students re-entering school after suspension. May assist by supporting or 'time-out' to help the school student self-regulate, and assist with the school student’s reaction/responses, to 'stay in school' and be able to learn more effectively.
- Social assistance for school students identified as requiring further social skill development.
- Single or mixed gender groups of school students depending upon the aim and content.
- Well-being classes as part of school curriculum around well-being, self-care, and positive self esteem toward better educational outcomes. Generally a qualified teacher must attend such curriculum-based options.
- Purchased pre-established Education programs such as FRIENDS, RAGE, SEASONS FOR GROWTH, FREE TO BE, RAP, LOVEBITES, etc (there are too many to list here). Please note that some of these resources require specific facilitator training to facilitate the program. Some social work students may not have this training; e.g., Seasons for Growth requires such training.
- Groups for self esteem strengthening, body image, emotion regulation, or any group of school students you identify as requiring 'a little help, guidance or direction'.
- Facilitating sessions for school students with whom it may be difficult to connect or engage, while they are building social skills.
- Facilitating workshops focused on social issues such as: bullying, building resilience, exploring and sharing feelings, collaborating, well-being groups, friendship groups, gender identity, and body image perspectives.
- Small groups/workshops focusing on emotion regulation (such as anxiety, anger or hopelessness).

The benefits of support groups are many, with a mutual benefit in sharing of experiences, information and coping strategies, with educational groups providing opportunities for learning, and the development of social skills.

### 3. Community work and advocacy

Community engagement is a core social work skill and may include engaging the school community as a whole, or the local community in which the school sits. This community element may also be assisting the school and local community to engage more either on the school grounds or in a public space. Involvement of any external agency must have permission by the relevant school authority.

There are many ways in which you can incorporate community work in a school environment. Some examples are:

- Linking schools to services for students and parents to access. The schools wellbeing staff attending the local interagency meeting with the social work student may build stronger or streamlined referral processes.
- An outcome of the above suggestion might be visiting and interacting with external agencies to meet needs across the school community. Check with your task supervisor to ascertain whether visiting such Services is appropriate in establishing whether they may be able to assist the school further.
- Policy development or updating in key areas such as the school Anti-
bullying policy, Well-being framework development or similar.

- Research in order to provide evidence for the effectiveness of the SWiS program, and what works in your school. Many data collection processes are already underway in schools. Have you considered the 'Flourishing at school' initiative?

- Mapping external agencies and Services of the local area in which the school is situated could be helpful for the school. Your school may already have a list of services they partner with. Service mapping is like doing a huge bio-psycho-social assessment of the demographic area, identifying gaps in Services, and considering this against the school demographic and local environment. If the school does not have a list, then this important activity could be compiled into a ‘community directory’ that could become a valuable resource within the school. Subsequent social work students could add to such a document, keeping it up-to-date. Ensure you discover all current providers who enter the school already, either regularly or ‘one-of’. It may be appropriate to visit these Services and find out more.

- Establish whether your school has breakfast/lunch clubs or food banks. Many schools have these types of student supports in place. If nothing is in place ask your task supervisor if you can help the school source out food banks and establish a breakfast/lunch club for students who need to access this service.

- Contributing to transition and orientation from primary to high school or assisting on school camps

UNE SWiS Moodle site (online learning platform)

Moodle is a learning platform designed to provide educators, administrators and learners with an integrated system to create personalised learning environments. Whilst researching school social work for ourselves, we resourced
several very helpful articles and resources that informed the decisions we made in preparation for establishing SWiS sites. Some of these resources and articles were collated into a file that we believed would be very helpful in helping social work students understand their role in a school setting. As a result, each week a new resource or article is revealed to social work students who are undertaking a SWiS placement in their SWiS Moodle site.

As social work students have engaged with the site, they in turn have uploaded new resources that they have found helpful. Subsequently, these have been documented into a Resource List within the Moodle site. Each year this list grows and is useful for fellow social work students. Make use of any online support your university offers; this continually informs, challenges and supports social work students’ learning within the school. It also gives social work students access to good resources and ideas.

**Accommodation requirements**

Accommodation has been a barrier for some social work students if they need to relocate for their placement; therefore, keep accommodation in your mind as you choose your school site. Information about accommodation can be found with a few phone calls, as well as discussing with your local school contact, or local social work supervisor. For example, there may be teacher housing available for the student to lease. Non-tenant teacher housing contact is (02) 8276 8000/8015. Our experience has been that sharing with teachers is not ideal, so having sole occupancy of teacher housing is recommended, but hard to secure. Other possibilities to consider include whether students may have family or friends living in or close by the school site. Nursing quarters being used in full or part for the placement is another possibility. Some schools have offered to pay for full or in part private rental costs. Some local churches and sport organisations may have billet contacts. Other community groups to approach are
Rotary, CWA or Lions groups for local scholarships. This is a conversation that can occur at the initial face-to-face meeting, or can be raised when you are more aware of which students may be able to relocate/travel for their placement. Our experience is that schools are very open to discussion about how this might work.

**Follow-up conversations**

A great deal of work and careful negotiation has taken place to get to this point of giving a social work student the opportunity of a placement in a school setting. Please ensure you have followed the steps in this document that outline the phases and principles for establishing a long-standing, sustainable placement opportunity in a school setting. It is assumed both school and university have established the placement in line with these steps, as these lay the foundation of the next handbook in the series “A Field Education Handbook for Social Work in Schools (SWiS) Placements: a handbook for supervisors and social work students undertaking placements in a school”.

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Within the second Handbook (title above) are many more examples and explanations of what a SWiS placement might look like in a school. A follow-up phone call or email could include the attachment of this second handbook. Outlined in the document is the importance of several processes in actually establishing a social work student in a school. Good orientation and structure are keys to a successful placement and should include a number of activities. Supervisors and social work students alike need to build relationships with the school executive and staff informing them of what they are doing. These, and many other vital pieces of information can be found in the Handbook.
For example, social work students need to make connections between theory and practice. The following list is found in the Handbook as examples of theories that influence practice in a school setting.

### Theories

Past students in schools have used many theories from the following list:

- Group work theory
- Strengths
- Empowerment
- Feminist theory
- Systems theory
- Conflict theory
- Learning theories (Social Learning)
- Child and adolescent development theories
- Behavioural theories (e.g. CBT)
- Anti-oppressive theory

At this follow-up stage we recommend that you state clearly that your social work student will be primarily learning, and assisting young people is a byproduct of their learning. Therefore, negotiating time required in the placement hours to complete university learning plans and paperwork is required. We advise that social work students need time set aside whilst at school to work on this paperwork, and not take it home.

**What happens during school holidays?**

Another area to explore at this stage is what the social work student will do
during the school holidays. This is a two-week period of time in which the social work students’ hours suddenly stop, unlike in any other placement. Some schools have suggested to us that they believe the social work student needs to stop, rest, recover and be prepared for the next term. Other schools have suggested the social work student link with local youth clubs such as PCYC, or local council holiday programs. This time is to be negotiated between the social work student and school. If the social work student wishes to stop and recover (it is very tiring being on placement, and in a school) then support for this option is recommended. If, however, the social work student wishes to continue, then negotiate a program for which they can prepare, or research during the holiday period.

We advise the task supervisor and social work student to establish what evidence will be presented concerning the holidays, and how the social work student’s hours will be monitored and demonstrated. Schools literally ‘shut down’ during school holidays and no school staff will be able to verify what hours the social work student might be working, if they choose to link with a community youth club or other form of placement during the holidays. Social work students are not to be allowed to enter the school grounds/buildings without school staff present. Conversations like these allow the potential new school to begin preparing for a SWiS placement.

**Final Preparations ... paperwork**

So, you are nearly ready to organize the university paperwork to establish the school as a placement site. We advise not to allow long times of ‘no contact’ to lapse between you and your contact person. Keep the program in the school’s mind and always offer the opportunity to answer questions or plan what roles the social work student might play. Dependent upon your university, the paperwork may be complex or confusing. It is best to assist the school with completing this paperwork, and build further, helpful, rapport.
Once the paperwork is completed, signed and returned to the university, you are then ready for a social work student to attend the first stage of your fieldwork process. This is generally a pre-placement interview at the school. This whole process is brand new for schools even though they have teacher ‘prac’ students often. Again, spend the time being present, or offering to be called upon through the interview if school and student ‘get stuck’. Again, we state that schools are very busy places and all the help and assistance you give in this stage of establishing the placement will help ensure a sustainable school site. Some schools will not persevere with the program (or even setting it up) if they feel confused or ‘pushed’ by you. It is important to assist your school with regular, informative follow-up conversations.

We recommend that you commence the school login process as soon as possible after the placement is cleared to go ahead. The correct form and procedure for obtaining a DEC login is provided as an appendix. First time schools are advised to keep this login authority as generic as possible for future SWiS students to also be able to use it. *This may take a week or two to authorize ... please ensure this is commenced as soon as possible. Ideally this should be commenced at the pre-placement interview.*

Assuming the pre-placement interview has been successful and the paperwork is signed and recorded at your university, then the school and student can confirm a start date. This is where the second handbook in the series becomes extremely useful. Inside the resource is an ‘orientation guideline’ for the first two weeks of the placement. Activities are listed in a timetable to assist your student and school become familiar with each other. Obviously the timetable can be customized, but please keep the activities as set out. Each activity helps the student orient themselves within the school and become familiar with the
setting. Some social work students will take to the noise, bustle and pace of school 'like a duck to water'. Other students may have their own struggles, and some of these may be due to their own prior school experience. Did they like their personal school experience when they were growing up? What were some of their 'stressors' at school, and are those stressors triggered now that they are back in a school? It is important for fieldwork supervisors to be aware of the start date, and be in contact with the social work student within this first week.

We recommend you share these SWiS resources with those who will be supervising the student. The second handbook in this series is very helpful for task supervisors in the school, as well as external field educators. Share these documents with each member so that they are all aware of the roles of the student, what group options there are, and what projects the student may work on. Of course, all of this is to be negotiated and clarified with school staff.

Learning plans may be seen and contributed to by school task supervisors. By sharing documents with the school staff, they become more informed of the university requirements, and the scope of the social work profession itself. This in turn aids the sustainability of the school site.

Lastly, maintain a strong communication link with the school, even a 3-4 weekly email will suffice so that the school knows they are supported and the social work student has not been 'left to their own devices’. We usually meet with our students once per month on the school grounds for supervision. This is an ideal time to ask the school admin staff if they know the social work student. You can gauge how 'visible' the student has been in the school by asking admin staff some questions about the student. You may also be able to meet with the task supervisor (sometimes just a wave across the room), or principal or other key staff members. We have found it is good to be seen in the school grounds once each month, even though this is a large time commitment.

Attending mid-placement presentation is a key time to be in the school
physically, and to organize some time after the student presentation, to speak with other school staff. Ensure you see the student’s workstation if you have not done so already. Is it adequate? Have they developed the space to be warmer and inviting? Do school students easily find the space? If it is not a suitable space you may be able to discuss this in readiness for the next student who commences their placement at this site.

We hope that these steps have been followed and that you have been able to apply them to your school setting. We assume that if there were any initial ‘teething issues,’ that you were able to work through them in a satisfactory way. We also hope that the social work student has had a positive experience of their placement in a school setting, where they have learnt and applied many skills. We trust that some school students have benefited from having the social work student present, which may in turn help the school students toward greater educational outcomes though the support they received. You are ready now to evaluate and negotiate any changes as your university prepares for the next cohort of students undertaking placement. It is best to have a sustainable model of back-to-back social work students in the school. I anticipate that you have been able to establish the second student as easily, or even more easily as both parties become more familiar with the systems. Note that each consecutive social work student will bring different skill sets to their placement. Be careful not to assume that every social work student will do the same activities to the same level of competence each time. SWiS placements must be negotiated for each unique student.

We wish you all the best with establishing a sustainable SWiS placement wherever your school may be, whether rural or metropolitan.
Appendix

FAQ example

The University of New England (UNE) is establishing Social Work field education placements in NSW schools. Students can engage with students & staff in helping increase childrens’ & young peoples’ educational outcomes.
Frequently asked Questions about Social Work in Schools

What year of study are the students in?
Bachelor students (4 year course) will be in year 3 & 4. Masters students (2 year course) will be in year 1 & 2.

How long are the placements?
Social Work placements are calculated on hours and range from 450 to 550 hours dependent upon the student’s course.

Who supervises students?
An external qualified social worker will supervise the students for 1.5 hours per full-time week. A school member, preferably part of the wellbeing team, will be the student’s task supervisor orienting the student to the school, and be a ‘go to’ person.

What areas can students work in?
Students can work in face-to-face situations with students for wellbeing strategies and support, facilitating groups for social & support for identified issues, and projects to support the school in fostering positive wellbeing. Together helping toward better education outcomes and well-being.

Where do students stay?
Accommodation is a barrier for some students, however some schools have offered to assist with accommodation costs through teacher housing. Can your school assist with this?

What does the school need to supply?
Schools are asked to supply a functioning workstation, computer, access to DEC and school online systems. Students require the access of a room in which confidentiality is upheld.

What support is there from UNE?
UNE is committed to offering quality placement experiences to both our students and schools. Our staff supports the student right through the placement process. A qualified Social Worker will contact the student each week. An academic liaison staff member will also contact the student regularly.

How do we find out more about a SWiS placement?
By contacting the UNE Social Work Field Education Office: by email sw-field@une.edu.au
or by phone (02) 6773 3722
DET network request form

All SWIS students will require a DEC login and access to school networks. The form to complete is SD01 from the DOE site. This form must be sent from the Principal's email direct, it cannot be their PA or anyone else. In the section where detail is asked for what reason, please state Social Work Student Placement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>School Code</th>
<th>Main Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**A) Applicant Location Details**

**B) Applicant Personal Details**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>DOB</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Please note** – you must provide a valid personal email address to be used to send you account details and activation instructions.

**C) Account Requirements**

**I have read, understand and agree to adhere to Use by Staff of Employer Communications Devices policy.**

**Applicant’s Signature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are you using this form for? (Tick (a) or (b)) ►:</th>
<th>►: Create new Account</th>
<th>►: Renew existing Account</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>►: RENEWING an Account, identify the DET User ID OR DOIS User number ►:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RE sticks on a new Non-DEC Guest Account?** Identify the role the Applicant will be filling (CHOOSE ONE FROM (1) to (7)):  

1. Non-DEC Student  
   If Non-DEC Student, identify ►:  
   - Scholastic Year  
   - Roll Class  

2. Non-DEC Contractor  
   If Non-DEC Contractor, identify ►:  
   - Contractor’s Company Name:  
   - Contractor Company’s ABN:  

3. DET Guest Browse (Internet Access only)  
   Specify reason for account being created Important ►:  

4. DET Guest (Network & Internet Access)  
   This field must be completed for all roles (ie 1 to 7) or form will not be processed.  

5. DEC Guest Lecturer  

6. Work Experience  

7. Practice Teacher  

**Note** – DOIS Accounts can be activated for periods of no more than 12 months, but can be extended by completing a renewal request.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account Start Date (DD/MM/YYYY) ►:</th>
<th>Account End Date (DD/MM/YYYY) ►:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**D) Authorisation (Required by Audit)**

To be completed by School Principal. When completed, this form must be sent via the Principal email to ItSupport@det.nsw.edu.au. (Please Tick) ▼

► I have ensured the Applicant has access to the Use By Staff Of Employer Communication Devices policy.  
► I confirm the Working with Children Check procedures have been completed with regards to the Applicant.  
► I authorise the creation / renewal of the above-listed Non-DEC Account.  
► I confirm the Applicant does not appear on the DoE payroll.

**Name** ►:  
**DoE Serial Number** ►:  
**DoE Email Address** ►:  

Form SD1: Network Guest Account Request for Schools (For Non-DEC Students/Employees and Practice Teachers in Schools)