



Curtin University

STUDENT GUIDE

Strategies to be successful in
your fieldwork placements

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KEY TERMINOLOGY

For the purposes of this guide the following terms have been used:

Fieldwork	Clinical or practical work placements/activities/practicums.
Fieldwork supervisor	Qualified professionals involved in the education of students during fieldwork including fieldwork/clinical supervisors, preceptors, clinical tutors, etc.

BACKGROUND

Fieldwork, a subset of work-integrated learning, facilitates students to build resilience and prepare for the workplace through engagement in challenges that focus on improving community outcomes (Universities Australia et al., 2015).

Preparing for the transition from classroom-based learning to workplace learning is important as these environments have several key differences. Cooper, Orrell, and Bowden (2010) describe learning in the

classroom as largely planned, predictable, replicable, theoretical, prolonged over time, reflective, and student centred. In contrast, learning in the workplace is often unpredictable, unique (not replicable), transient, and focused on action and performance. Furthermore, the organisations in which students undertake fieldwork are focused on the delivery of services with student learning an important but lower priority for staff (Cooper et al., 2010).

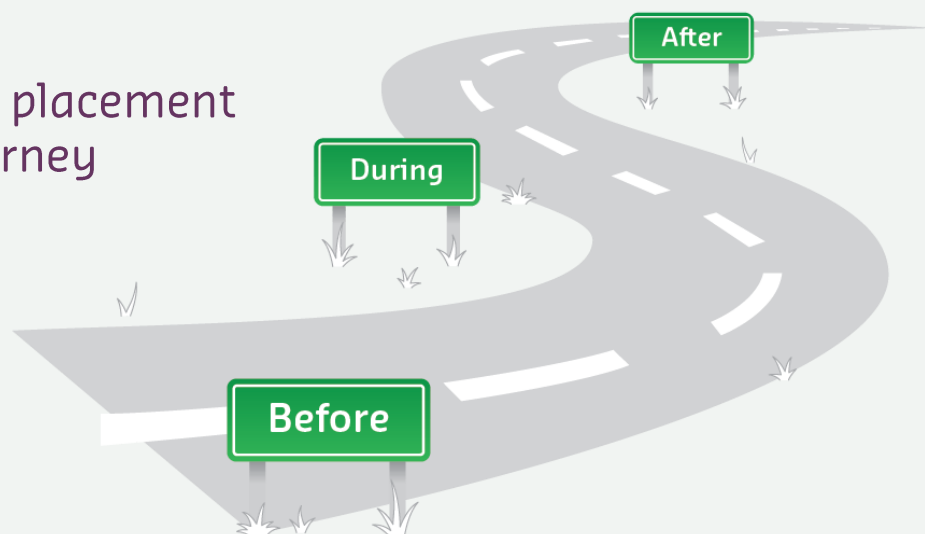
PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

Fieldwork is a critical, and in many cases mandatory, component of the health-related courses at Curtin University. Fieldwork placements allow the theory, assessment, intervention, and practice skills taught in the classroom to be practised in authentic settings with real patients/clients under the guidance of experienced practitioners. Fieldwork has been touted as the “most influential learning experience in a student’s journey to becoming a competent health professional” (Siggins Miller Consultants, 2012 p.3).

This guide will be useful for students:

- **before commencing placements** to ensure you are fully prepared, and to highlight early warning signs that you may struggle during fieldwork;
- **during placements** to provide guidance and strategies that may improve your performance, particularly if you are experiencing difficulties; and
- **after placements** to provide strategies that can enhance your performance in future placements.

Fieldwork placement journey



FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE FIELDWORK PERFORMANCE

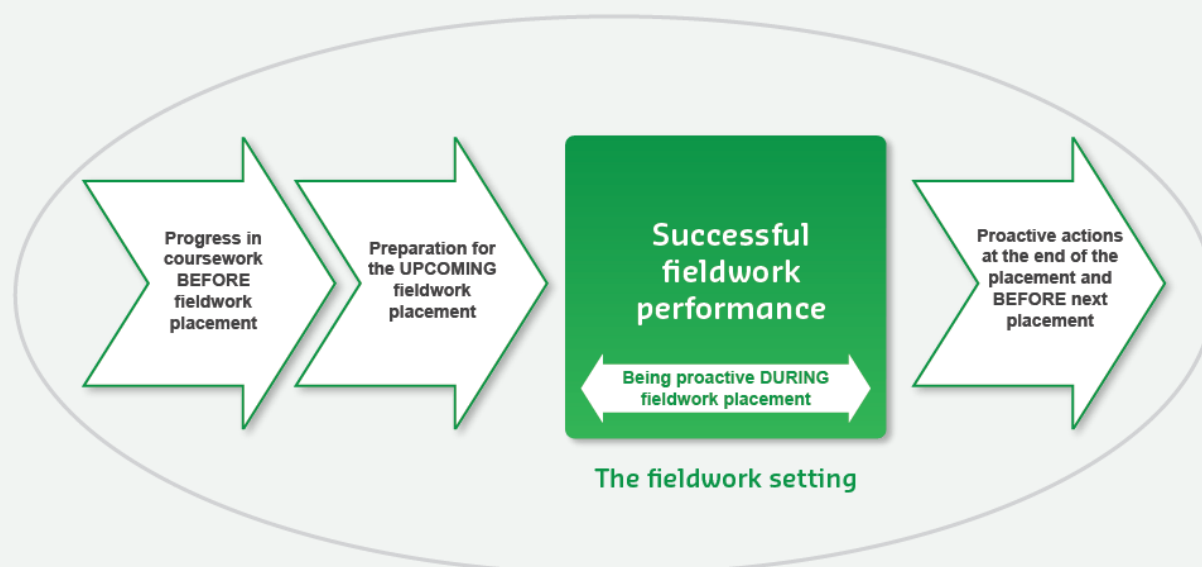


Figure 1: Key factors that influence student performance in fieldwork

FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON FIELDWORK PERFORMANCE

The majority of students perform at the required standard during their fieldwork placements. These students are well prepared for each placement, have attended and committed themselves to their coursework lectures and tutorials. They are proactive about their learning, work collaboratively with their fieldwork supervisors during the placement, and utilise an array of strategies during placement to cope with the physical, cognitive and emotional demands of learning within workplace settings.

Student health professionals are expected to be reliable, demonstrate their enthusiasm to learn and to develop as professionals. Behaviours that fieldwork supervisors wish to see in students include: revision of relevant information, good

problem solving and clinical reasoning skills, embracing impromptu learning opportunities, responding positively to feedback, acting with honesty, integrity, respect, fairness, empathy, initiative and self-responsibility (Gibson et al., 2015; Hauer et al., 2009; Jervis & Tilka, 2011; Krusen, 2015).

Chipchase and colleagues' (2012) Australian study involved 161 experienced clinical educators of allied health students. These educators were asked to identify the characteristics that indicated students were prepared for clinical learning. The most cited characteristics, which over 97% of educators agreed were important, can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The top 16 characteristics that indicate students were prepared for fieldwork (Chipchase et al., 2012)

The student....	
1.	Is willing to work as a part of a team with peers and colleagues
2.	Is willing to receive feedback/constructive criticisms
3.	Is willing to ask questions and clarify to ensure understanding
4.	Is willing to self-evaluate
5.	Complies with professional matters (e.g. confidentiality)
6.	Is sensitive/empathic to clients' needs and concerns
7.	Is willing to discuss and exchange ideas to maximise patient care
8.	Demonstrates a desire to learn

The student....

9. Is willing to try new techniques
10. Is willing to take responsibility for their own learning
11. Displays a willingness to take on board any appropriate requested task
12. Respectfully engages with people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds
13. Demonstrates respectful and non-judgemental communication
14. Shows initiative
15. Has self-awareness of own limitations and is honest about current level of knowledge and skills
16. Is attentive

FACTORS THAT HAVE A NEGATIVE INFLUENCE ON FIELDWORK PERFORMANCE

A small number of students find fieldwork overly challenging, stressful and complex, resulting in them performing below the required standard. Ultimately, some of these students fail their placement. There is a multitude of reasons why students experience difficulty during fieldwork. Boileau and colleagues (2017) categorised these underlying difficulties into three interrelated areas: cognitive and non-cognitive issues and contributing factors.

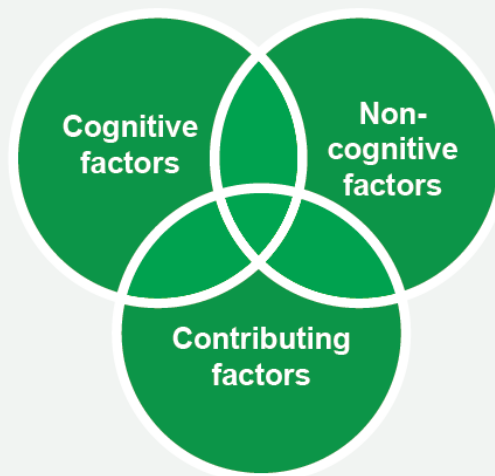


Figure 2. Factors for underperformance in fieldwork

Table 2: Reasons students fail fieldwork placements

Student issues:	
Cognitive reasons	
Insufficient knowledge base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misses critical features of common clinical patterns • Lacks confidence • Poor judgement of patient/client safety issues
Insufficient skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks specific skills in information gathering, relationship building or implementing interventions • Communication lacks clarity and/or comprehensibility • Can verbalise ideas but not carry them out effectively • Unsafe practices (physical, emotional, etc.) • Unable to analyse and interpret assessment information • Lacks ideas and strategies. Tends to only copy and repeat what the educator does • Does not take responsibility for learning during placement • Poor or no reflective practice—does not think about how to improve • Inadequate interpersonal and intrapersonal skills • Inability to deal with conflict in the workplace

Inadequate clinical reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathers copious information without evidence of inductive or deductive reasoning • Rigid thinking • Difficulty dealing with the ambiguity that accompanies clinical reasoning • Slower than average cognitive processing speed/ability
Performance anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks confidence • Has intense anxiety about performing or being directly observed • Has a history of debilitating anxiety in other performance situations • Focuses on paperwork and documentation over working with people
Poor organisation/time management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comes late to meetings and misses deadlines • Disorganisation interferes with learning and performance • Often overwhelmed by routine tasks • Does not communicate learning needs • Misses key information that a patient/client or team member provides • Requires constant reminders to complete work • Struggles to retain information e.g. forgets processes and guidelines • Cannot seem to 'catch up' with workload and compensates by often working late, excessive hours • Makes same mistakes repeatedly, regardless of how many times discussed
Non-cognitive reasons	
Attitudinal indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks initiative • Limited cultural humility and limited ability to assist a patient/client feel culturally safe • Does not meet professional behaviour standards • Offends, or is disrespectful to, staff or students • Creates friction/conflict with others • Has a pattern of expressing provocative attitudes • Challenges staff in an argumentative manner • Blames others for own difficulties • Lack of insight into issues • Has an attitude of superiority • Has difficulty with taking the perspective of others • Insufficient motivation – lack of energy and engagement with placement • Focused on self NOT patients/clients • Ignorance of professional responsibilities • Withdrawn and depressed attitude • Has an excuse for most problems • Overly self-critical of own performance • Not striving to improve • Difficulty managing emotions (emotional overreactions)
Feedback and self-evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inaccurate self-assessment, lacks insight into own performance • Misconceptions of purpose and/or value of feedback • Difficulty interpreting feedback • Negative reaction to feedback; defensive when given constructive feedback
Extenuating psychosocial factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates distress that raises concerns for the student's well-being • Has had a recent significant negative life event • Experiencing financial difficulties • Stress related to other commitments e.g. work, family, university deadlines • Limited help seeking behaviour • Experiencing significant psychological distress

Contributing factors

Learning environment - organisation, educator or fieldwork setting issues

- Poor student-educator relationship
- Inadequate feedback (insufficient, delayed well after the event, focused on the person rather than the behaviour, non-specific)
- Lack of information on the expected performance
- Lack of guidance on how to improve performance
- Being given responsibilities beyond the student's level of competence

FIELDWORK SUCCESS PLAN

Student activity

Create your fieldwork success plan

1. Create a blank word document titled 'My fieldwork success plan'.
2. Create the headings:
 - BEFORE I start my placement
 - DURING my placement
 - AFTER my placement
3. As you work through the various modules in this guide create a list of actions you will implement before, during and after your upcoming placements.

Strategies that will help you create, implement and reflect on your *Fieldwork success plan* are found in the following modules in this guide. You will find a sample *Fieldwork success plan* in Appendix A.



MODULE OVERVIEW

- MODULE 1:** Self-assessment (self-reflection) on your **progress and grades** in your university course prior to commencing fieldwork may indicate how well you perform on a placement. This includes factors such as your performance in practical and verbal assessments (e.g. OSCEs and viva exams), course weighted average, attendance at lectures and tutorials, organisational abilities and self-confidence.
- MODULE 2:** Strategies to enhance your **preparation for the upcoming** fieldwork placement.
- MODULE 3:** Strategies to implement **during each fieldwork placement** including creating a collaborative working relationship with the educator/s, showing initiative, and being organised.
- MODULE 4:** Strategies for you to utilise if you are **struggling to meet the required standards** of your placement. This module includes a remediation process designed to support you and your supervisor to address areas of concern.
- MODULE 5:** Proactive actions in the **final few days** of each placement.
- MODULE 6:** Next steps if you **fail your placement**.
- MODULE 7:** Proactive actions **before the next placement**.

Tip

Key messages for students:

1. Be prepared for each fieldwork placement well in advance.
 2. Enter each placement with a growth mindset and embrace every opportunity to learn and progress your knowledge, skills and competencies.
 3. Build a strong and collaborative working relationship with your fieldwork supervisor/s and the team you are working with from the first day of placement.
 4. Actively seek and clarify feedback from your fieldwork supervisor/s.
 5. If you are struggling or think you are at risk of failing your placement, take action and create a plan for success. Talk to your supervisor/s, peers, and/or Curtin staff as soon as possible.
 6. Solidify what you learned in each placement so you can take this learning to your next placements. Continually build on your identified strengths and areas of improvement.
-



BEFORE PLACEMENT

MODULE 1: SELF-ASSESSMENT OF YOUR PROGRESS AT UNIVERSITY TO DATE

It is not always possible to predict who will flourish and who will struggle during fieldwork placements. The intensity of your study, effort, and practice in your coursework units may be the best indicator of how successful you will be.

Task: This self-assessment task requires you to be honest about your study habits and other personal factors that may have impacted your success in your course thus far. Tick the factors that you feel are pertinent to you, then read about potential ways that these factors may influence your performance during your upcoming fieldwork placements.

1. Tick the box if these are applicable to you
2. Read the 'Activities to consider' and add strategies you will use to your **Fieldwork success plan**.

Tick (if applicable to you)	Reflection	Activities to consider
<input type="checkbox"/> I have failed or just passed practical assessments e.g. OSCEs, vivas, skills laboratories <input type="checkbox"/> I am extremely nervous when being assessed during OSCEs, vivas	<p>OSCEs, vivas and other practical examinations simulate the verbal and practical skills and fast paced thinking required for fieldwork. A large majority of fieldwork will require you to practice whilst being observed and assessed by your fieldwork supervisor.</p> <p>Are thought blocking and/or under-confidence hindering your ability to express your ideas and clinical reasoning?</p> <p>Is talking too fast or quietly resulting in you being difficult to understand?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monash University's online course on mindfulness https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/mindfulness-wellbeing-performance or a Curtin mindfulness course http://students.curtin.edu.au/personal-support/ then practice the skills during placement. • Video yourself doing interviews or practical skills. Review your performance. Critique how you can improve. • Ask your peers or supervisor how they control their emotions when nervous. • Write a journal and be honest about your confidence. Write down examples of any common negative self-talk. Note situations in which you have felt more confident and consider how elements of those might be replicated in fieldwork.
<input type="checkbox"/> My course weighted average is below 60 or I have multiple units with a grade of below 60	<p>Knowledge gaps might impact your practice, for example, being unable to provide a verbal or written rationale for decisions such as assessment or intervention choices. Skill gaps might result in you being unable to work confidently and effectively with, people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify your knowledge and skill gaps and review course notes, seminal theory articles and book chapters (knowledge) and practice (skills) before placement. • Make daily notes during placement on key knowledge, skills, theory that you are struggling to understand. In the evening/weekends review these areas.

Tick (if applicable to you)	Reflection	Activities to consider
<input type="checkbox"/> I have missed many tutorials or not listened to lectures or not completed many readings	Why have your marks been low? E.g. lack of motivation or study, not seeking sufficient clarification of key information/assessment tasks. What key information and skills have you missed or do not understand fully?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start or join a learning group with peers. Practice (e.g. role model/simulate) key skills and assessment procedures relevant to your upcoming placement. http://students.curtin.edu.au/study-support/skills/
<input type="checkbox"/> I have submitted multiple late assignments OR frequently request extensions <input type="checkbox"/> I am disorganised most of the time	<p>Being disorganised during placement is an early indicator of unprofessional behaviours. You might miss or forget key information, be late for meetings and take too long to complete daily client/patient notes.</p> <p>Why do you submit late? What are the factors in your life that lead you to be unable to meet your major university commitments?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List all the factors that lead you to being disorganised. Create solutions that diminish or eliminate these factors. Take note of peers who are organised—ask them what strategies they use and try these out. Observe your fieldwork supervisor/s, ask them how they keep organised and try these out. Consider enrolling in one of Curtin's time management courses [http://students.curtin.edu.au/study-support/skills/]
<input type="checkbox"/> In written assignments, I regularly have comments about poor grammar or spelling errors	What aspects of your grammar, spelling, and presentation do not meet the required standard?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before placement, locate exemplars of daily progress notes or written reports that are used commonly in your profession. Take these with you to placement. Paraphrase, do not plagiarise. In the first few days of placement, find exemplar notes and reports and use them to assist you. Again, paraphrase, do not plagiarise. Consider enrolling in one of Curtin's English language/or written communication courses [http://students.curtin.edu.au/study-support/skills/]
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal and health issues regularly impact my study and/or attendance at university	<p>What are the personal issues that disrupt your study or attendance? What are your triggers or early warning signals? How can these be managed best while you are on placement?</p> <p>Do you have a written plan of action on what to do when these issues arise?</p> <p>Have you spoken to Curtin Counselling Services or your own health practitioners about the possible implications of fieldwork on your health?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List the actions you will take before and during placement to minimise the issues. Create a written plan of your triggers, what to do when the issue is starting to impact and who to contact. Consider devising this with your health practitioners or Curtin Counselling [http://students.curtin.edu.au/personal-support/] Discuss your plan with your supervisor early in the placement. Ensure they know what to do in case of an emergency. If there are external/personal factors that might impact on your performance these should be raised with your university fieldwork staff, ideally before the placement commences. Sometimes it is better to delay a placement (if possible) rather than to attend when external/personal factors are going to significantly impact on your ability to perform to your potential.

Tick (if applicable to you)	Reflection	Activities to consider
<input type="checkbox"/> My work disrupts my focus on my studies	<p>What are your plans for your employment during placement? Working night-shifts or all weekend often result in students being tired and cognitively fatigued which impacts on performance during placement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to work less than 10 hours per week during placements. • Discuss the potential impact of your fieldwork placements with your employer well in advance. • Consider seeking financial advice http://students.curtin.edu.au/personal-support/
<input type="checkbox"/> I lack confidence in talking to new people (e.g. children, older people, people from different cultures) <input type="checkbox"/> During group work (e.g. in class or assignments) I rarely speak/contribute <input type="checkbox"/> I feel nervous or do not ask tutors or lecturers questions	<p>What has influenced the confidence you have in your interpersonal and communication skills? What emotions do you experience when you think about the ways in which you will be required to perform in fieldwork? What you are previous experiences with managing those emotions? When have you managed them well?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a job or do volunteer work where you need to speak with diverse people e.g. therapy assistant, customer service. • Speak up in class. Let your tutors know you are working on being more confident in speaking up so they can support you with this. • Video yourself, critique your communication—record specific areas of concern and develop a plan of action focused on practicing specific skills (known as <i>deliberate practice</i>). • Write a journal and try to understand when you are scared or lacking confidence. What are your triggers? What scenarios are you confident in? • Seek support to develop your public speaking e.g. consider joining Toastmasters http://www.toastmasters.org.au/ • Attend Curtin's course specifically designed for success on placement (currently known as <i>Freeze Up, Freak Out or Fail</i>) http://life.curtin.edu.au/health-and-wellbeing/
<input type="checkbox"/> I feel that I lack a 'toolbox' of strategies (e.g. assessments and interventions) to use during fieldwork placements	<p>Your university course has been designed to provide you with adequate knowledge and skills to use during any fieldwork placement. Translating that into a practice environment can be challenging.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review course notes, seminal theory articles and book chapters. • Write a list of all the skills, assessments, interventions, counselling techniques etc. that you could use during fieldwork placements. Refer to this list regularly during placement. • As you learn new strategies during fieldwork, add to them to your list.

MODULE 2: PREPARATION BEFORE MY FIELDWORK PLACEMENT

Arriving on day one of your placement organised and motivated to learn will set you up to perform at your best. Table 3 below outlines a number of actions you should consider taking before the placement begins.

Table 3. Proactive actions to support fieldwork preparation

Theme	Actions
Understand the fieldwork site and area of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research the fieldwork site – internet, SONIA.• Locate students who have been on placement before you. Ask them for tips and hints of what to do (and not to do).• Review your notes from your coursework units.
Understand the health professional that you want to be	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect on the health professional that you want to portray whilst on placement. Describe or depict yourself as a health professional by drawing a picture, making a video or listing the values you want to embody.
Create your goals & self-care plan for the placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask yourself what you hope to get out of this placement. Develop a learning contract/plan (or similar).• Ensure you have a self-care plan so you can maintain your well-being throughout the length of your placement.
Mandatory forms, tests, vaccinations, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure all the required placements documents are up to date. If required/requested take a copy (or original) of your police clearance, first aid certificate, vaccinations, etc.
Contact the fieldwork site	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact the site as per the university or fieldwork site instructions. Be professional and convey your enthusiasm for your upcoming placement in all communication with staff at your placement site.
Arrive on day one super organised	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If possible, visit the fieldwork site before placement, so you know where you are going, where to park, etc.• Ensure a professional appearance (uniform or attire) and wear your Curtin name badge (as required by your course).• Carry with you pens, notepads, a diary, relevant textbooks, theory notes, your 'toolbox' of assessments, interventions and skills, and any specific equipment (e.g. stethoscope).
Understand what the university needs you to do before, during and after placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be proactive ensuring you know what is required for your placement and have copies of (or online access to) any essential forms. Do not expect your fieldwork supervisor to know what university assignments or forms need to be done as staff have many competing commitments and often supervise students from more than one year level or university.



DURING PLACEMENT

MODULE 3: DURING MY PLACEMENT

This section relates to time spent on your fieldwork placement. Placement lengths differ from course to course so for ease of understanding this section it is divided into three overlapping sections:

1. Early stage of placement (first few days/weeks)
2. Middle stages of the placement

Tip

The fieldwork supervisor's priority is the roles and responsibilities of their core job (e.g. client/patient caseload, day to day administrative tasks such as documentation, team meetings and phone calls).

Students who do well on a placement understand that their role is to work collaboratively with the supervisor in undertaking the roles and responsibilities of the organisation in which they are placed.

In other words, if you focus on delivering quality services your own learning needs (and associated assessment/placement grade) are likely to be optimised.

When supervising a student, a major priority for each supervisor is to ensure the student is learning how to practice safely and effectively.

The supervisor's role is complex and time-consuming and includes: coordinating the student's placement, role modelling behaviours and skills, providing emotional and professional support, giving feedback to the student/s, as well as evaluating the student's performance (Boileu et al., 2017).

When a student is struggling to meet the required standard whilst on placement the supervisor will inform the student and the university.

The supervisor and Curtin staff will then support the student to address areas of concern.



Students are novice practitioners

It takes years to become an expert in any profession (Benner, 1984). During fieldwork placements, you are on a journey to develop your competence as a health professional. Embrace every opportunity offered to you during your fieldwork placements so you can learn new skills, behaviours and professionalism.

Tip

Every placement site is different.

Each fieldwork setting is different so you need to demonstrate flexibility in your approach to learning and your behaviour accordingly.



Whilst on placement certain minimum standards of professional and ethical behaviour are required such as maintaining client confidentiality at all times and not posting information about your placement on social media. Other aspects, such as the use of technology, will differ from site to site so will need to be discussed with your supervisor.

We encourage supervisors to develop effective working relationship with students. Such relationships include minimising the power

difference that exists between the student and the supervisor. However, it is not possible to entirely eliminate this power difference as the supervisor is required to assess your performance on placement and decide if you have met the learning objectives (e.g. competency standard). We encourage you to establish a relationship with your supervisor/s that is conducive to learning and one that creates an environment where you feel safe, can be honest about your learning needs and confident to ask questions and make mistakes which you learn from.

1. Early stage of placement (first few days/weeks)

Below (see Table 4) are a number of proactive strategies to help optimise your fieldwork experience in the first days or weeks.

Table 4. Proactive strategies for early stage of your placement

Theme	Action
Make a good first impression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrive on time.• Look professional.• Greet the receptionist (if appropriate).• Be quiet and respectful of others (e.g. staff and clients) if you are waiting for orientation to commence.• Be prepared to start working straight away (e.g. see a client).
Establish placement expectations (yours, supervisors, placement sites)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss your goals for the placement; revise if required following discussion with supervisor.• Discuss your learning style and feedback preferences with your supervisor. Seek clarification on your supervisor's preferred approach to student supervision (e.g. frequency and duration of supervision, how feedback will be delivered). The <i>Supervisor-student expectations</i> document (Appendix C) may be useful to guide this discussion. Note: The supervisor's approach to supervision may not align with your preferences but you need a clear understanding of their expectations if you are to work effectively.• Pay careful attention to the supervisor's expectations outlined at orientation.• Clarify workload expectations (e.g. approximately how many clients should you be seeing each day/week).• Clarify expectations of additional placement requirements outside of hours (e.g. paperwork, preparation).
Establish an effective relationship with your supervisor to maximise your learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research shows that supervisors are looking for students who demonstrate: willingness to learn (e.g. receive constructive feedback, work well in teams, take an active role in learning); high professional standards; positive personal attributes (e.g. empathy, initiative, self-awareness of own limitations and honesty about current level of knowledge and skills).
Think about the legacy you want to leave at the end of the placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider how you would like the supervisor and others at the placement site to remember you after the placement finishes. The legacy you leave behind impacts on future employability (at that site and even at other sites). Aim to be remembered for being helpful, showing exceptional care towards clients and families, supporting fellow students.
What to disclose?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you have had challenges on previous placements it may be helpful to discuss these with your supervisor at the start of your placement. This will allow specific strategies to be put in place to help you address previous placement concerns.• If you have a Curtin Access Plan (CAP) you need to be aware that in many circumstances the accommodations recommended are not applicable to fieldwork as students need to demonstrate the competencies/standards required by the professional accreditation body. Consider what your supervisor might benefit from knowing about you.

Pause and reflect

What new ideas/strategies will I add to my Fieldwork Success Plan?

2. Throughout the placement

Many of the recommendations on the previous page are important to maintain throughout your placement to maximise success. This section includes additional suggestions/tips that can facilitate and maximise the chances of success on a clinical placement. It is important to note that sometimes, despite all efforts, your placement may not go to plan. This section also includes tips to assist you in determining what actions are required in order to address any issues/concerns. The sooner you identify issues the more time you will have to address these. **Do not ignore warning signs** (e.g. supervisor telling you they are concerned about your performance, your health/sleep starts to deteriorate, you are the last person to leave the facility because you are still writing up client notes).

The following are important aspects of fieldwork that, when done well, will significantly improve your learning and the outcomes you achieve.

Responding appropriately to feedback

Feedback is “a process whereby learners obtain information about their work in order to appreciate the similarities and differences between the appropriate standards for any given work, and the qualities of the work itself, in order to generate improved work” (Molloy & Boud, 2013, p. 6). Feedback can be formal or informal, delivered via different modes (e.g. written, electronic or verbal) and sources (e.g. self-evaluation, peers, supervisor, clients and other members of a multi-disciplinary team). For detailed information and specific strategies to adopt see pages 10 – 11 and 19 – 20 of the [Millennial students in fieldwork: Guidelines to success](#) by Quail et al. (2018).

In their latest guide on feedback, Carless and Boud (2018) discuss ‘feedback literacy’ which they represent in the figure below.

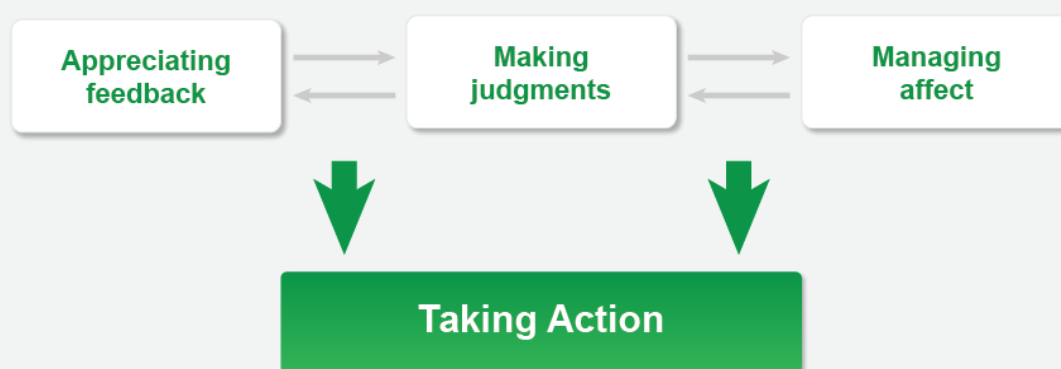


Figure 3. Feedback literacy process (Carless & Boud, 2018)

Carless and Boud (2018) describe the feedback literate students in the following ways. Feedback literate students:

Appreciating feedback

- understand and appreciate the role of feedback in improving their work and engage as an active learner in this process
- recognise that feedback information comes in different forms from different sources
- use technology to access, store and revise feedback

Making judgments

- develop the ability to make sound judgements about their own work and the work of others (e.g. peers and experience practitioners)
- participate productively in peer feedback
- refine their ability to self-evaluate in order to make more accurate and robust judgments

Managing affect

- maintain emotional equilibrium and avoid defensiveness when receiving critical feedback
- are proactive in eliciting suggestions from peers or educators and continuing dialogue with them as needed
- develop habits of striving for continuous improvement on the basis of internal (self) and external (other's) feedback

Taking action

- are aware of the need to take action in response to feedback
- draw inferences from a range of feedback experiences for the purpose of continuous improvement
- develop a repertoire of strategies for acting on feedback

Another good article on feedback is Algiragris's (2014) tips on receiving feedback in clinical practice.

Self-reflection

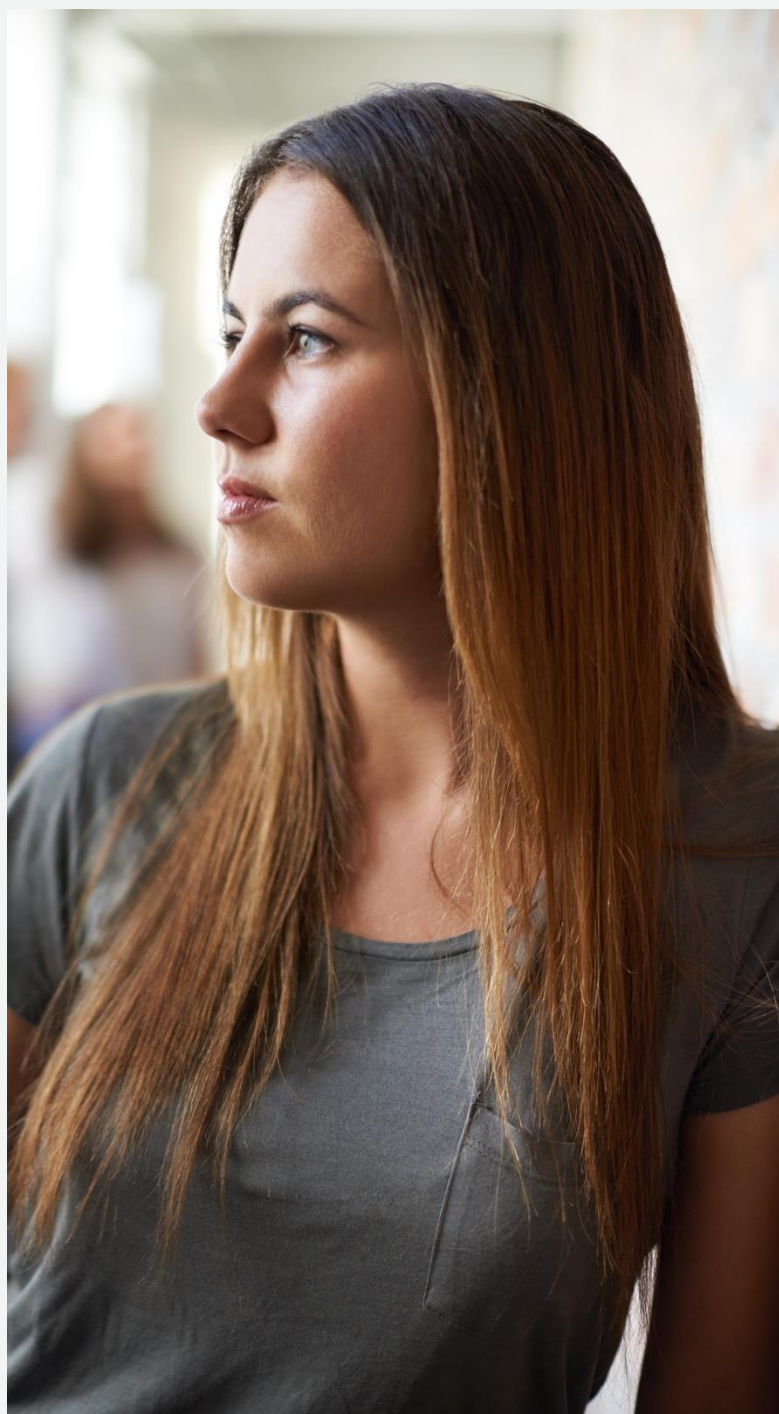
Self-reflection encourages critical thinking which in turn allows you to have greater insight into your learning process and practice (Wigens & Heathershaw, 2013). Australian health practitioner regulations require health professionals to regularly engage in reflective practice to ensure they are accountable for their actions (Andre, Heartfield, & Cusack, 2017). Students who either don't engage in, or are not proficient in, self-reflection often encounter difficulties during fieldwork placements. Poor self-reflection can lead to differences in perceived and actual performance and misalignment of student and supervisor perspectives. The supervisor is ultimately responsible for determining whether minimum standards/learning objectives have been achieved so aligning of actual and perceived performance is important.

Self-reflection is not something that only occurs at formal assessment periods e.g. midway and final assessment but rather something that should be part of your practice on a daily basis. After each clinical interaction, ask yourself the following questions:

- How did I feel during that session (e.g. confident, under-prepared, out of my depth, scared to make a mistake, concerned about what the client/supervisor was thinking)?
- Was the service provided to the client good? Were they satisfied?
- What went well? What didn't go well?
- If I could do the sessions again, what would I do differently?

Periodically, ask yourself:

- Is the placement going according to plan?
- Am I achieving my learning goals?
- What is going well? What are my strengths?
- What are the areas that I need to improve?



Growth mindset

Students start out as novice practitioners at the beginning of their development as a health professional. You are going to encounter situations where you do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to practice independently. You may feel overwhelmed at times and will make mistakes as part of the normal learning process. What is important is that you have a growth mindset whereby you see mistakes and constructive feedback as part of growth and learning (Bush, Schreiber, & Oliver, 2013; Algirairgri, 2014; Krusen, 2015).

Adopting a growth mindset means that your self-talk focuses on framing mistakes as opportunities for learning and growth rather than as failure or lack of innate ability. An example of this is using the phrase 'not yet' competent instead of 'failure' as seen in Professor Carol Dweck's [TED Talk](#). Having a growth mindset also encourages a 'forward-looking' or 'solution-focused' approach instead of a 'backward-looking' or 'problem-focused' approach. When self-reflecting, once you have identified issues of concern, consider what you need to do differently in the future.



Seek out learning opportunities

Supervisors value students who demonstrate important personal attributes such as a high level of motivation to learn and try new techniques (Chipchase et al., 2012). As a student wanting to develop an effective working relationship with your supervisor, you should carefully consider your personal attributes. Here are some tips related to positive personal attributes that supervisors and future employers are seeking:

- Make the most of potential learning experiences on placement. Seek out learning opportunities that might be otherwise missed/ignored by other students (Lambert & Glacken, 2005).
- Take the initiative to identify other students on placement with you or make time with your peers outside of placement time to set up debriefing (reflective learning) conversations (Svenhuysen et al., 2015).
- Be an active learner. For example, try to find out answers before asking your supervisor; work through clinical reasoning processes before discussing with your supervisor.
- Ask for the feedback that you want to receive. For example, if you are unsure about a particular assessment task, ask your supervisor to watch you perform this task and provide feedback.
- Value-add to the placement site. For example, if you have completed all assigned tasks, ask your supervisor or other facility staff if you can be of assistance (e.g. "Is there anything that I can do to help?").
- Adopt help-seeking behaviours. Many struggling students don't ask for help even when this has been suggested to them (Cleland, Arnold, & Chesser, 2005). If you are struggling you need to be proactive and **ask for help!!**
- Taking on responsibilities leads to a sense of agency which is empowering (Clouder, 2009). Aim to demonstrate your autonomy as you move towards completing your course.
- When facing challenges it helps to think about what is in your control (what you can influence) and what is out of your control (you can't influence). Try focus your time and energy on the things that you have control/influence over.



Figure 4. Zones of control

Be an effective team member

An important health professional competency is effective teamwork. Remember to respect the role that everyone plays in client care including the receptionist, ward clerk, cleaners, gardeners, etcetera. If you are unsure of anyone's role, particularly on a multidisciplinary team, find out. Get involved in relevant organisational events, for example, attend professional development sessions. Work with your peers, for example, sit in on their sessions and see what they do and how they communicate.

Addressing conflict with a supervisor or student

In your professional life conflict is inevitable so it is important that you learn not to fear conflict. If you are experiencing conflict with your supervisor or one of your peers during your placement you should take action immediately. Ultimately, you have two choices when facing a conflict: do something or do nothing. We advise you do something as, if the conflict continues, it is likely to have a negative impact your performance and/or confidence.

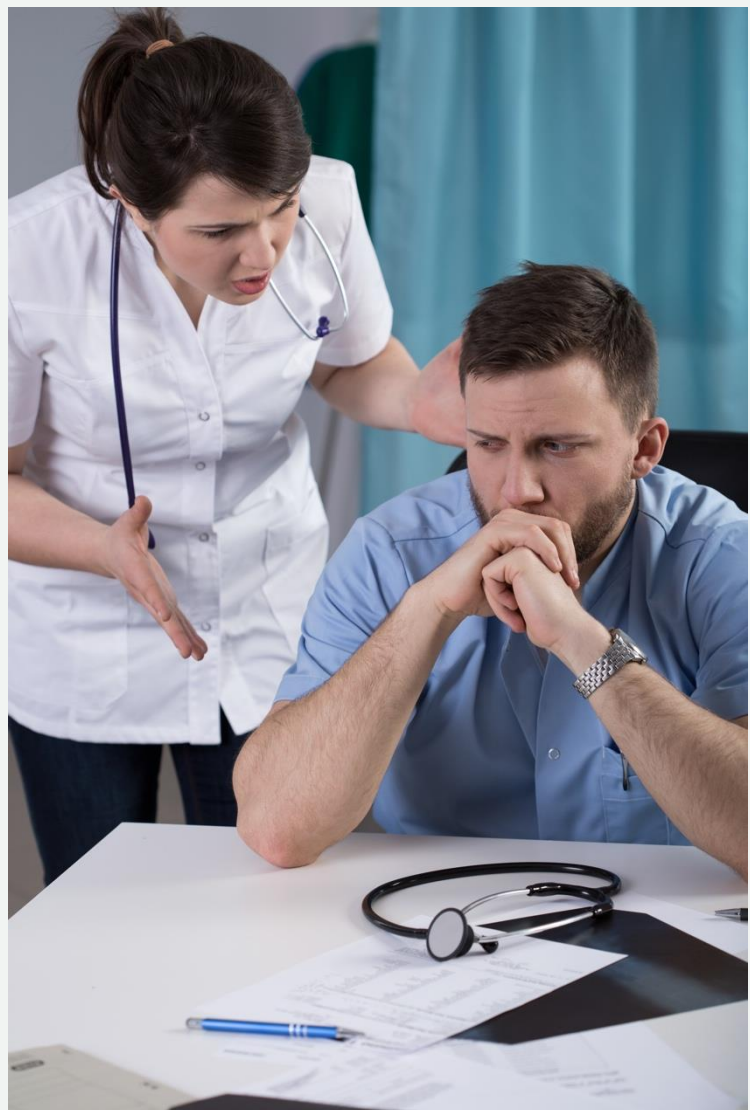
The first step:

As soon as possible, discuss your concerns directly with the supervisor or student.

- be objective and focus on the problematic events, behaviours or comments that were made. Be honest about how you felt or reacted. Give a specific example(s) of when the problem occurred.
- avoid being subjective or blaming. Do not make it personal.
- use active listening skills; listen and ask questions so you understand the other person's perspective.
- identify where you are both in agreement and where there is disagreement.
- clarify the expectations of the other person.
- agree on a plan and a way forward.
- follow through and implement what was agreed.
- if the conflict dissipates, express your gratitude to the other person for listening and acting on your concerns.

If this does not have the desired outcome:

- contact the relevant fieldwork staff at the university to discuss your concerns.



In some cases, the supervisor or other student may not be willing to change their approach. You may need to modify your reaction to the situation. This may require you to match your communication or interpersonal style to their expectations.

For further information on conflict see [Curtin University's counselling and disability services advice on dealing with conflicts](#).

MODULE 4: I AM STRUGGLING TO MEET THE REQUIRED STANDARD

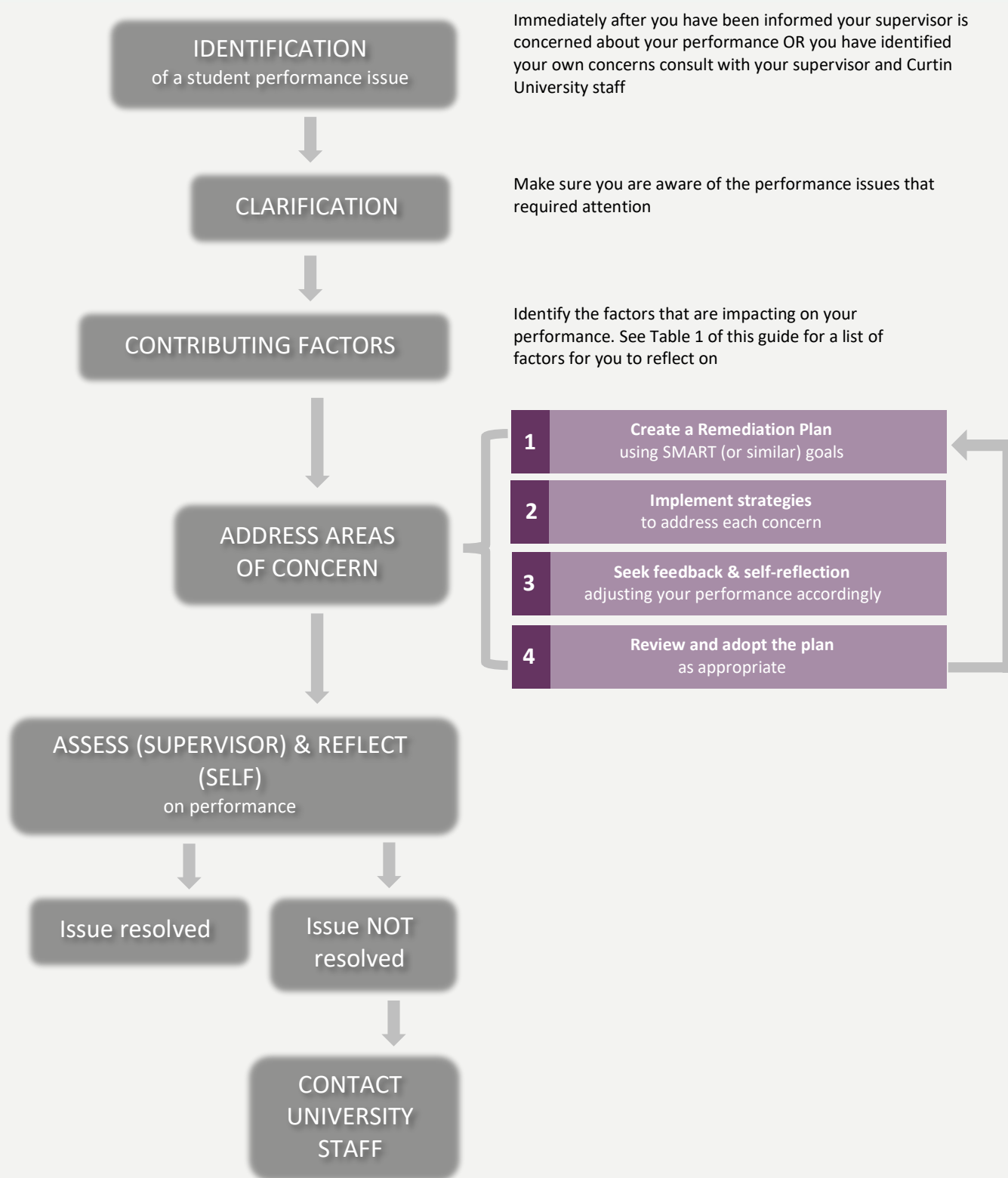
How will I know if I am at risk of failing my placement?

- You have been told this directly by your supervisor/s
- You keep receiving the same feedback
- Supervisor uses phrases like “I am concerned about your performance, ability, practice”
- Supervisor asks you something like “Have you had the same difficulties in previous placements?”
- Supervisor states something like “I am not seeing the improvement or change in your performance that I am expecting”



What to do or consider when things are not going well/according to plan

Outlined below is the process we recommend students and their supervisor—with support from relevant university staff—work through to address the performance concern(s) identified.



Tip

Developing SMART learning goals

One system to guide the development of learning goals is SMART (Doran, 1981): specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.

Specific: goal must be well-defined, clear and unambiguous

What do you want to accomplish? By when? Who will be involved?

Measurable: define criteria for measuring progress towards the goal

How will you know when you've achieved your goal?

Achievable: goal must be achievable

How will your goal be achieved? What are some of the constraints you may face when achieving this goal?

Realistic: goal needs to be relevant

How does a goal fit with your immediate plan? How does it fit with your long-term plan? How does this goal fit with other goals you have?

Timely/time bound: goal must have a timeframe

What will you do today or this week? What will you do in six weeks from now? What will you do in six months?

See Appendix B for an example of SMART learning goals

Some specific actions for common issues of concern are provided in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Suggestions to address common fieldwork issues

Issue	Actions
Skills/knowledge	Make a list of what areas of knowledge/skills you have recently identified to be lacking. Prioritise your list then make a schedule to revise each e.g. each night revise one or two topics.
Clinical reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work through case studies.• Articulate your clinical reasoning.• Observe good role models e.g. a peer who you know is doing well or a qualified therapist.• Use a structured framework to work through clinical reasoning in relation to a client/patient e.g. SNAPPS (Summarize, Narrow, Analyse, Probe, Plan & Select (see explanatory video).
Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In consultation with your supervisor prepare a timetable to assist with workload management.• Arrive early each day.• Plan your day at the start of each day or the previous evening.• Set aside time each day for documentation.• Seek support from Curtin University's support services including their online time management course.
Behaviour	The first step is acknowledging and taking responsibility for your behaviour. If a supervisor has identified a particular behaviour that they don't think is appropriate it may be futile to argue or justify this behaviour. To be successful in your placement it is likely that you will need to change this behaviour. If you are not sure what is required you need to ask your supervisor to describe the behaviour that they expect you to demonstrate.

Issue	Actions
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do mock (practice) assessments and treatments with a peer. • If English language competency is raised as a concern, practice speaking English as much as you can. • If you have difficulties communicating with a particular age group (e.g. elderly, young children), seek out volunteer opportunities in your spare time such as visiting an aged care facility or day care centre. • Shadow others (peers, clinicians) to observe their clinical communication skills. • Refer to the University communication skills support.
Personal/external factors	<p>If you are not coping seek help/support as a matter of priority. Speak to someone you trust. We highly recommend you contact the university (counselling and disability services and/or fieldwork staff) to discuss your concerns/issues. Seeking support from your medical practitioners or a private counsellor is another good option.</p>
Performance anxiety	<p>Seek support from Curtin University's counselling service.</p>



MODULE 5: FINAL STAGES OF MY PLACEMENT (LAST FEW DAYS/ LAST WEEK)

The final stages of a placement can be demanding as your caseload is often high leaving little time for administrative tasks. Planning your time in the lead up to the end of the placement is important so that you are not trying to catch up on tasks at the same

time as trying to complete final placement tasks (e.g. write discharge and transfer summaries). The table below highlights some important things to be considered in the final stages of a placement.

Table 6. Suggestions for finalising tasks at the end of fieldwork placement

Task	Action
Complete all client handovers and transfer summaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with this task as early as possible. Ideally complete these when you see a client for the last time as part of completing their final notes. Check with your supervisor to determine the level of detail and structure of handovers.
End therapeutic relationships well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure your clients know when you will be finishing your placement. This shouldn't come as a surprise to them. Explain what will happen to their management after you finish. Do your best to streamline client care from you to the next management plan, writing comprehensive (but succinct) notes.
Leave a positive impression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure you have completed all the tasks expected of you before you leave your placement. Let your supervisor know if any stocks or paperwork (e.g. exercise sheets, assessment forms) are running low. Write a thank you note/card to your supervisor and/or the other staff in the work area.
Receiving your final evaluation/feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen attentively. Write notes of key points. Paraphrase feedback in your own words. Thank your supervisor for providing feedback and supervision over the placement.
Provide feedback to your supervisor (usually after you have received your final evaluation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide constructive feedback on your placement and the supervision you received by completing the end of placement survey (where relevant). Be honest but professional providing both positive and constructive feedback.
Placement debrief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend any placement debrief (if applicable) as this can be an excellent way to consolidate your learning.

AFTER PLACEMENT

MODULE 6: I FAILED MY PLACEMENT

What should I do?

The very first action is to meet with the relevant fieldwork staff from your course. A number of issues will be discussed including, but not limited to, the need to change or delay your next placement. You should also discuss what you and university staff will tell your next.

Next you should develop a new [Fieldwork Success Plan](#) (see Appendix A), outlining the specific action you need to complete before your next placement. For other strategies to consider before the next placement refer back to [Module 2](#) on page 11 of this guide.

The following prompts can also be used to assist with developing your *Fieldwork success plan*:

- When I am managing well, I have the following characteristics:
- The early warning signs of me not managing well include:
- The important people (supports) in my life are:
- The type of support I need during placement includes:
- The things I need to do every day to keep well include:



MODULE 7: PREPARATION FOR MY NEXT PLACEMENT

The period after your placement finishes, and before the next placement commences, is a critical period. During this time, you should:

- review your previous placement(s),
- create a list of actions you should do before the next placement, and
- start getting ready for the next placement.

Table 7. Review and critique your performance on your fieldwork placement(s)

Review/plan	Reflection
Receiving feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you receive feedback? • Did you try to clarify the feedback so that you could improve? • How did you cope emotionally when receiving critical or constructive feedback? Were you defensive or did you disagree with significant aspects of the feedback?
Critical self-reflection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory • Evidence based practice • Practical skills • Communication • Documentation • Professional behaviours • Teamwork • Working under stress 	Based on your formal feedback (assessment tool), informal feedback (other verbal and written feedback) and your own self-reflection identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your strengths • Areas for improvement • Areas of your practice with which you are confident • Areas of your practice in which you are lacking confidence • Were there any aspects of the placement that triggered negative behaviours or emotional reactions? Why? • Were there any external factors that impacted negatively on your performance e.g. employment, health or other personal issues?
Next placement (or job)	Start preparing for your next placement as early as possible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you need to do differently in the first few days/weeks of the next placement to enhance your success? • What elements from the formal feedback and your own critical self-reflection do you plan to address in your next placement?
Learning contract/plan for next placement	Write your learning contract or plan based on the formal feedback from previous supervisors and your own self critique. If there are areas of practice that you have not had the chance to experience as yet discuss these with your next supervisor.

APPENDIX A:

EXAMPLE FIELDWORK SUCCESS PLAN

BEFORE I start my next placement

Having completed the 'Self-assessment of my progress at university to date' checklist, I will complete the following before I commence my next placement:

<p>My course weighted average is 62</p> <p>I only scored 53% in my orthopaedics unit last year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will do 20 hours of preparation, reading and practice before my next placement. • My next placement is on an orthopaedic ward at a large hospital: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ I will review all the course notes from XXX units ◦ I will obtain a copy of XXX textbook, and take this on placement with me ◦ I will review XXX theory ◦ I missed 4 or 5 tutorials/labs in these units – I will re-watch the key iLectures and review the lab notes • I will spend 2 hours talking to a colleague who has done an orthopaedic placement – to find out the focus of the practice, assessments, interventions, key strategies, tips on what to do (and not to do).
<p>In vivas, I am nervous and under-perform</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will watch some sample interviews on YouTube. • I will do 3 practice initial interviews with another student before I start placement and watch the videos I made of my performance.
<p>I am generally disorganised</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will do the following BEFORE placement so that I arrive organised for day one: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ buy and use a diary – for placement, work and my social schedule ◦ visit the site beforehand ◦ buy a notebook for record keeping • take my new set of organised notes and appropriate textbooks on day one • I will ask my supervisor about the strategies they use to keep themselves organised • At the end of every day, I will update my To Do list and review this with my supervisor
<p>I don't get enough sleep</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During placement I will form the habit of going to bed around 9:30pm and waking at 6:15am. • I will go for a 45-minute walk 4 times per week. • I will put my phone in the kitchen to charge overnight – NOT in my bedroom.
<p>I am working 25 hours week</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will cut down my work hours to 8 hours per week during my placement. • I will save money before placement so I can limit my work hours during placement.

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE SMART LEARNING GOALS

DURING or AFTER my placement

1. During your placement, or at the end, your supervisor/s will give you feedback about some areas of your practice that need to improve.
2. For each area needing improvement, create SMART goals and strategies that will lead to success on fieldwork. Add this to your Fieldwork Success Plan.

Feedback	SMART goal	Possible action
CLINICAL REASONING Supervisor states something like: “When verbalising your clinical reasoning to me, you are not integrating any evidence”	When verbalising my clinical reasoning, I will research and include at least TWO sources of evidence to support my clinical decisions.	I will research relevant evidence for each of the assessments and interventions that we commonly undertake on this placement Before approaching my supervisor, I will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write or review my notes on the patients e.g. diagnosis, prognosis, barriers and strengths, their goals, etc. • write a list of possible assessment or intervention options in order of priority. • seek the appropriate evidence. • use a relevant framework or model to structure my clinical reasoning. When I talk to my supervisor, I will refer to my notes. As I improve my confidence, I will not use my notes. I will ask my supervisor for feedback on my clinical reasoning.
POOR REFLECTIVE PRACTICE Supervisor states something like: “You do not initiate reflective practice. You need to be prompted to think about how to improve your assessments and interventions”	I will initiate reflective practice at least TWICE every day during my next fieldwork placement by talking to my supervisor or another student or writing down my reflections.	After each client and staff interaction I will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a relevant framework or model to structure my thinking and reflection. • Write brief notes on the session and then clarify my thinking and reflection - how I will explain this to my supervisor. • I will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ positive aspects of my performance ○ what I learned ○ areas for development/what I would change next time Read about reflective practice in this specific area of practice e.g. “Reflective practice in mental health: advanced psychosocial practice with children, adolescents and adults” by Webber and Nathan (2010). Review notes from units related to reflective practice.

Feedback	SMART goal	Possible action
SAFETY CONCERNS Supervisor states something like: “A few times this week you have been unsafe when transferring patients to and from their wheelchair”	I will maximise the safety of every patient 100% of the time, by stopping and planning the transfer and communicating clearly to the patient. Every time I am uncertain I will first talk with my supervisor, about the safest method to complete each transfer.	Practice transfers with another student or family member. Discuss the potential risks with supervisor and discuss alternatives. Read the Occupational Health and Safety guidelines for my placement site.
RECEIVING FEEDBACK Supervisor states something like: “When I give you feedback, you are too defensive. I need to know that you understand the feedback I am giving you”	When I receive feedback on how to improve my performance, I will use my active listening skills (and ask questions to clarify anything I am unclear about) to ensure I understand what I need to improve.	Create a process on how to receive feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen carefully—use active listening—to understand the feedback. • write notes. • clarify the feedback with the supervisor to ensure I understand what I need to improve. • ask for more examples if I still don’t understand. • write a list of the key areas in which I need to improve. Next time I demonstrate the specified skill, tell my supervisor how I went, what I improved and what I plan to do next time. Read articles on how to receive feedback such as Algiraigri (2014).

APPENDIX C: CLARIFYING SUPERVISOR-STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Read each statement below and then estimate how you feel about each. For example, with statement 1 if you believe strongly that it is the supervisor's responsibility to manage all aspects of the placement circle the number 1. If you think the supervisor and student should be equally involved in this process circle number 3. If you think it is definitely the student's responsibility circle number 5. Once both the student and supervisor(s) have completed this separately compare and contrast your ratings. Focus your discussion on where your ratings, and thus your expectations, differ markedly.

1	It is the supervisor's responsibility to manage all aspects of the placement	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5	The student is responsible to manage all aspects of the placement
2	It is the supervisor who decides on the learning objectives for the placement	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5	It is the student who decides on the learning objectives for the placement
3	The supervisor should develop an appropriate timetable for the student	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5	The supervisor should leave the development of an appropriate timetable to the student
4	The supervisor is responsible for ensuring the student is introduced to the appropriate staff, facilities, services, policies & procedures of the placement host organisation	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5	It is the student's responsibility to ensure they have been introduced to the appropriate staff, facilities, services, policies & procedures of the placement host organisation
5	A warm, supportive relationship between the supervisor and student is important to the success of the placement	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5	A warm, supportive relationship is inadvisable because it may obstruct the objectivity for both the student and the supervisor
6	The supervisor should insist on regular meetings with the student	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5	The student should decide when they meet with the supervisor
7	The supervisor is responsible for the student's safety during the placement	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5	The student is responsible for their own safety during the placement
8	The supervisor is responsible for the safety & quality of the services the student provides to clients	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5	The student is responsible for the safety & quality of the services they provide to clients
9	The supervisor should provide regular, timely & constructive feedback to the student	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5	The student should work independently & not rely on the supervisor for feedback on their performance & progress
10	The supervisor should insist on seeing all drafts of written work to ensure the student is on the right track	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5	The student should only submit drafts of work when they want constructive feedback from the supervisor
11	The supervisor is responsible for providing emotional support & encouragement to the student	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5	Personal counselling & support are not the responsibility of the supervisor; the student should look elsewhere for this.
12	The supervisor is responsible for decisions regarding the standard of the student's performance	<u>1</u> 2 3 4 5	The student is responsible for decisions regarding the standard of their performance

Adapted by Dr Margo Brewer, Director Practice & Interprofessional Education from Kearns and Finn (2017).

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