



**Bachelor of Arts (Hons.)
in
Early Childhood Education
Supervised Practice Placement Handbook**



The 'East Quad' at the Grangegorman Campus

School of Languages, Law and Social Sciences

Technological University Dublin

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Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| General overview of placement..... | 3 |
| Benefits of Placement | 3 |
| Rationale for Placement | 3 |
| Learning Outcomes to be achieved on placement..... | 4 |
| Year 1..... | 4 |
| Year 2..... | 5 |
| Year 3..... | 6 |
| Year 4..... | 6 |
| Role and responsibilities in the placement..... | 6 |
| Student’s role and responsibilities..... | 6 |
| Supervisor’s role and responsibilities | 7 |
| College Tutor’s role and responsibilities..... | 8 |
| Monitoring of student on Practice placement..... | 8 |
| Student Conduct on Practice placement | 8 |
| Method of selecting placements and assigning students to placements..... | 9 |
| Assessment of student on Practice Placement | 10 |
| Procedures for reporting and dealing with problems that may arise during the placements..... | 11 |
| Preparation for placement..... | 11 |
| Frequently asked questions | 12 |
| Tripartite contract between college tutor, supervisor and student | 14 |

General overview of placement

The BA in Early Childhood Education is a taught programme leading to an academic and professional qualification in early childhood education. The early years are now well recognised as a critical period in children’s development. To respond to the needs and rights of children and families receiving services in this period requires highly qualified professionals. In TU Dublin the formation of these professionals occurs through a taught programme which draws from current theory, research, policy and practice developments. Education and training needs and developments are regularly reviewed and implemented. Supervised placements are an integral part of the programme and foster the development of professional competence in the students. The following guidelines describe the respective roles of the placement supervisor as appointed by the work placement (hereafter called supervisor), the student and the college tutor. They summarise the expected learning outcomes of the practice placements across the four years of the BA (Hons.) programme. This student handbook has been prepared by the Programme Committee for distribution (electronically or in hard copy) among the students prior to commencement of the practice placement.

Benefits of Placement

The placement provides opportunities for progressive professional development where the students can develop a reflective practice approach based on their experiences. Placement also offers the student opportunities for putting into practice theories, ideas and activities generated and discussed on the taught programme.

Rationale for Placement

The value of practice placement has been clearly identified in The First 5, the Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (Government of Ireland, 2018a) strategy document which seeks to ensure that all staff involved in delivering early childhood services “are fully prepared for the demands of their professional roles” (2018, p. 112). This strategic objective supplements the overarching goal of Higher Education Institutions in Ireland offering undergraduate Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) degree programmes; to prepare graduates for the rigorous of working with young children. A critical aspect of initial professional development in this regard relates to professional practice placement, i.e., time spent in

the field during undergraduate training gaining experience of working with children from birth to six years, early childhood educators, parents, families, communities, and other partners such as mentors and early years inspections. TU Dublin is allocating practice placement hours in keeping with the requirements (DES, 2019) of the Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education (Level 7 and Level 8) Degree programmes in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Ireland.

Learning Outcomes to be achieved on placement

Learning outcomes on placement are monitored through the use of Placement Assessment Forms, which have been designed for each year of the course. They provide guidelines for students' gradual progress in developing:

- a) A broad-based repertoire of skills and competencies
- b) Students' level of initiative
- c) Analytical, critical and self-reflective capacity as a practitioner

There are three parties involved:

- The supervisor
- The student
- The college tutor

They will receive copies of the Placement Assessment Forms in order to facilitate consistency and transparency across the expected student learning outcomes and self-assessment criteria.

The Placement Assessment Forms for Years One to Four detail parameters of increasing challenge in students' placement practice within each year (e.g. in Year 1 phases A and B) and across their four years of learning.

Year 1

First Year students spend a total of hundred hours on placement in Semester two. During this period, the student's role is largely an observational one through which they gradually familiarise themselves with staff, children, policies and routines of the setting. Students also assist the teacher/early years educator with the full range of

activities available in the placement and record daily notes/comments/reflections in assessment form.

Depending on the level of confidence, the student may begin to plan, organise or lead developmentally-appropriate activities/learning experiences with small groups of children in consultation with the teacher/early years educator. The student also assists with routine child management in accordance with the placement's policies. Throughout the first year of practice placement experience, students should discuss progress with staff and incorporate constructive feedback into practice.

Year 2

Second Year students spend a total of three hundred hours on placement, consisting of two days a week and two block weeks in January. After the initial setting in-in period, students are expected to move quickly from playing an assistant role to taking increasing levels of initiative and responsibility. They will normally plan two daily activities and facilitate appropriate learning opportunities for individual children and groups of children in consultation with the staff. They will participate fully in the regular feedback sessions with their placement supervisor and will give due consideration to staff feedback on their practice.

Second Year students are expected to facilitate and manage routines and transitions on a regular basis. They are also expected to participate in a range of interactions with the children, offering social, emotional and learning support. As the semester progresses, students will manage a half-day session in cooperation with the other members of the team, taking responsibility for planning, organising and facilitating the holistic development of the children. Second Year students are required to compile, present and discuss evidence of their own learning with their supervisors and college tutors throughout their time on placement. Based on this ongoing process, students will be able to select appropriate examples for the placement assessment forms and take joint responsibility with their supervisors in the completion of the assessment forms.

Year 3

Third Year students complete a total of three hundred hours on placement, this will include two day each week and a number of block weeks. Following a short induction period, Third Year students are expected to show initiative in planning, carrying out and reviewing experiences for individual and groups of children where appropriate. There is a requirement in this year for students to share their planning and assessment experiences for children's learning with their colleagues in class. Furthermore, they are expected to become involved in all aspects of the work of the service under supervision. Third Year students are expected to contribute fully to the work of the team on an ongoing basis through actively applying and sharing (where appropriate) knowledge and skills from college-based modules to the work. A strong emphasis is placed on the importance of reflective practice and students are expected to write regular critical reflections on their placement learning in a placement journal. Students are expected to prepare for supervision and show how they have incorporated feedback into their practice. Final year students are responsible for compiling and presenting the evidence required to the supervisor for joint completion of the end of year assessment forms.

Year 4

Fourth Year students complete a total of hundred hours on placement, spending two days each week and a block week on placement in Semester one. By the end of their Fourth Year placement, students should be practicing at the level expected of a newly qualified (Level 8) early years staff member.

Role and responsibilities in the placement

Student's role and responsibilities

Students should always follow the advice of the public health authorities.

Students should keep daily contact records during the supervised practice placement.

Placements are designed to enable students to

- Take full advantage of all opportunities for learning and personal development available on placement
- Carry out placement-based assignments

- Plan and carry out activities and facilitate developmentally appropriate experiences as detailed in the placement assessment form in consultation with the supervisor / co-worker
- Monitor own progress and prioritise learning goals with respect to learning outcomes identified in the placement assessment form
- Students are advised to keep weekly records of own learning
- Make positive use of supervision
- Students should be under supervision of staff at all times

Each student is required to complete four supervised placements in a variety of settings during the programme.

Supervisor's role and responsibilities

The role of the supervisor is an important one. The student should be supervised by an experienced staff member who has completed appropriate training in Early Childhood Education.

The supervisor's role involves the following:

- Induction of the student to the placement setting, familiarising student with placement aims and objectives, ethos of placement setting, placement policies, work practices and roles of different staff members and student's own role within the placement.
- Planning a programme of work with the student so that she/he will have the opportunity to develop in accordance with the expected learning outcomes of the Placement Assessment Form.
- Ensuring that students are never left alone while working with and caring for children.
- Providing adequate supervision time with the student to deepen her/his understanding of the philosophy, aims and function of the service.
- Facilitating the student's own self-assessment with particular emphasis on the development of the capacity to be reflective.
- Identify areas of strengths.
- Identify areas that require further reflection and work.
- Validate the student's own records of progress.
- Completing the Placement Assessment Forms following the college guidelines.
- The substance of the Placement Assessment Form should be discussed in advance with the student and then submitted to the college tutor at the end of the placement.

Should a placement supervisor have an issue with the student on placement they will contact the tutor.

College Tutor's role and responsibilities

A tutor offers a supportive role for the students and focus on both the academic and professional practice placement elements of the programme. Tutorials are held in the college/online with the students and the tutor also visits students in their professional placement setting. Tutors organise and set up practice placements for students. They facilitate pre placement seminars and placement preparation sessions. The tutors ensure that students have an experience of various age groups and various types of early years provision across the four year programme. The minimum qualification of college tutor is BA in Early Childhood Education.

During a student's practice placement, the tutor facilitates a three-way meeting in the early childhood education setting between the placement supervisor, the student and themselves to monitor the progress of the student in the setting.

Monitoring of student on Practice placement

To aid the supervisors in their important work the college offers the following:

1. Visits of tutors to practice placements. These visits may take a form of a meeting between the supervisor, student and college tutor. These visits are arranged by the college tutor in collaboration with the supervisor. They provide an opportunity for the student, supervisor and tutor to discuss the aims and objectives of the placement, the student's progress, the specific learning opportunities of the particular placement and how these can be fully exploited to achieve the objectives of the placement.
2. Supervisors' meeting. This meeting occurs annually. It takes the form of a seminar which provides an opportunity for supervisors to discuss any placement related issues. A guest speaker is invited by the college to speak on a topic of interest to the field of early childhood education. This meeting is also an opportunity for supervisors to meet each other and enables the college staff to express their appreciation to the supervisors for their important contribution to early childhood education training.

Student Conduct on Practice placement

This code of conduct presents a summary of student's professional responsibilities

during the practice placement element of the programme. These responsibilities apply to all students on the early childhood education programme.

Students must ensure that they:

- Act in the best interests of the children, families, and colleagues
- Respect the rights, confidentiality, and privacy of children, families and colleagues
- Maintain high standard of personal conduct and behaviour
- Communicate effectively with service users and others involved in their care
- Obey the regulations, policies and guidelines of the service
- Act within the limits of their knowledge, skills, competence, and experiences
- Comply with requirements for safeguarding and protection of children
- Demonstrate ethical awareness
- Keep accurate records

Method of selecting placements and assigning students to placements

A wide range of placements in services for birth to six years are available and include crèches, playgroups, naíonraí, HSE nurseries, voluntary and community organisations, services for children with additional needs and Department of Education funded services. While most placements will offer students the opportunity to work directly with children under the guidance of the supervisor, a placement in an early childhood agency may be considered where appropriate.

Guidelines for practice placement selection:

1. The practice placement reflects current practice and demands of the profession as well as facilitating students' translation of theory into practice.
2. The service must be registered with Tusla and for Pre-School settings, the potential supervisor must hold relevant and appropriate qualifications in Early Childhood Education (ideally Level 8 or 9, minimum Level 6) and two years of experience in the Early Years sector. In the case of Primary Education Schools, the teacher must be registered with the Teaching Council.
3. The practice placement will be able to provide the required number of practice placement hours (as required for 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year).

4. The placement provides appropriate opportunities for the student to meet the required learning outcomes of supervised practice placement for students of early childhood education.

5. The practice placement supervisor will provide regular formal supervision to the student. The placement must allow the student the opportunity to integrate theory and practice and to facilitate the student's progressive development.

6. The practice placement must confirm that in addition to their current health and safety procedures, they are fully compliant with any and all recommendations/requirements from the NPHE/HSE in respect of providing a safe place of work for employees in respect of COVID-19. This confirmation can be provided as a statement via email.

Assessment of student on Practice Placement

In accordance with TU Dublin guidelines for practical work, the student's work is deemed to be either:

Satisfactory: The student has reached the standard required at the end of Semester One/Two of Years One, Two, Three and Four on the BA in Early Childhood Education.

or

Unsatisfactory: The student has not reached the standard required at the end of Semester One/Two of Years One, Two, Three and Four on the BA in Early Childhood Education.

In the case of an unsatisfactory grade, the grounds for the student failing must be made clear. It is vital that these grounds have been noted and discussed with the student and college tutor as soon as they become a cause for concern and that the student has been offered the opportunity to improve.

If a 'Fail placement' mark is recorded for a student at an Examination Board, he/she will be required to undertake a repeat placement. This may be negotiated with the same

placement or with a different setting. One additional opportunity only to pass placement will be offered.

Procedures for reporting and dealing with problems that may arise during the placements

Where reservations exist regarding a student's fitness to commence practice placement, this should be referred by the Programme Tutor and Practice Education Team to the Head of School in a clear and unequivocal manner, documenting the evidence for such reservations (e.g. erratic behaviour, persistent lateness, inappropriate disclosures or boundaries). The Practice Education Team and Head of School then formulates in accordance with the University Code of Conduct and Fitness to Practice Policy an appropriate response in order to address and resolve the concerns in relation to the student's fitness to practice.

Alternative arrangements for students in the event that a placement is not available

In the event that a placement is not available for a student, so that it prevents the student from completing practice placement in any one year of the programme, arrangements will be made to allow the student to complete the practice placement element as soon as an alternative placement can be located.

Preparation for placement

All students will complete a short introduction to child protection before starting placement in First Year. On commencing placement, they will be familiar with Children First (2015) and the relevant sections of the Childcare Regulations (2016). They will undertake a full module entitled "Child Protection and Safeguarding in the Early Years" in Third Year.

All students should seek and receive induction into the service's child protection policies and procedures at the start of the placement. Students should be required to read and sign a document to say they have read and understood the service's child protection policies. The student will be familiar with the role and responsibilities of the Designated Liaison Person. Clear guidelines on steps to be taken if a student

encounters a child protection issue on placement will be discussed in college before the placement begins. Should the supervisor or another identify a child protection concern in relation to the student on placement, the issue should be discussed at the earliest possible time with the student and college tutor. Students should never be alone with children and any concerns in relation to this should be discussed as soon as possible with the placement supervisor and college tutor.

All students must have obtained Garda vetting before commencing placement. In addition, international students or students who have lived abroad must obtain police clearance from their countries of residence. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic additional online courses and a contract in relation to social contacts will have to be signed before students can commence their practice placement.

Frequently asked questions

Q1. What should happen in the case of a student who may not be suited to the field of early childhood education?

As in most professions, some students may present for training who may not be suitable for working in the field of early childhood education, perhaps due to personal difficulties or other issues that may come to light on while on placement. It is desirable, where possible, that both college tutors and supervisors work together in these circumstances. Some students may need more time, experience or training to deal with the personal issues and to help them reach the required levels of practice to work effectively in the field. Extended or repeat placements may be arranged for such students but only one repeat placement can be offered in any given academic year.

Q2. As a supervisor, what should I do if the placement is not proceeding as well as expected?

If the supervisor has any immediate concerns s/he should raise them as soon as possible with the student and also inform the college tutor, as the quicker the problem or issue is addressed, the sooner it can hopefully be resolved.

Q3. What if the student lacks motivation in the placement setting?

All students are encouraged by college tutors, upon commencement of a placement, to ask questions and present themselves in a professional, enthusiastic and focused manner. If the student seems unmotivated, the supervisor should raise this with the student and aim to resolve any outstanding issues. If this persists, the college tutor should be contacted for further advice and support.

Q4. What should happen if the student is arriving to the setting late or is not attending regularly?

Punctuality and reliability are two core qualities required in the area of early childhood education and are, therefore, taken very seriously by the college. The supervisor should discuss with the student in the first instance indicating expectations in these matters. If the situation persists, the placement supervisor should contact the student and college tutor as early as possible. The college tutor will liaise with the student and, if necessary, the setting, to resolve any such issues. Any absence from placement should be notified to the supervisor as soon as possible and notified to the college tutor. Absences are treated as in the workplace and must be excused by a medical certificate or by submission of evidence that they are due to immediate personal or family emergencies.

Q5. What if the student is behaving inappropriately?

All students, prior to the commencement of each placement, are briefed by college tutors on placement expectations and appropriateness of behaviour and dress in the workplace. It is useful for supervisors to echo this upon placement commencement so as to clarify expectations of the setting to students in regard to their performance in the workplace and, more generally, to emphasise the importance of the student presenting themselves in a professional manner.

Tripartite contract between college tutor, supervisor and student

Dear.....,

On behalf of the TU Dublin City campus, we would like to thank you for hosting a student on practice placement. As part of our commitment to a quality experience for both the student and the practice placement the following Tripartite Contract sets out agreed responsibilities regarding the student, the placement supervisor and the college tutor. This contract is in line with the Department of Education 'Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education (Level 7 and Level 8) Degree Programmes for the Early Learning and Care (ELC) Sector in Ireland. A signed copy of the Tripartite contract, signed by the student, the placement supervisor and the college tutor, is a mandatory requirement prior to the student commencing practice placement.

Responsibilities of the college tutor to the student:

- provide student with preparatory sessions prior to practice placement commencement
- provide support and guidance for students during their practice placement
- provide student with details of practice placement and placement supervisor

Responsibilities of the college tutor to the practice placement supervisor

- provide the supervisor with information and guidance on the process governing the delivery of practice placement
- Provide the Placement Provider with information in relation to any access or support needs that may require adjustments
- Practice Placement Supervisors will be encouraged to attend TU Dublin city campus for a Training/Support day with relevant guest speakers.

- Accredited training will be offered to Placement Practice Supervisors (PPS) if enough PPS request it

Responsibilities of the Placement Provider to the student:

- Provide the student with a full and clear induction to the organisation and its working practices, including health and safety arrangements, fire precautions and emergency evacuation arrangements, how to report accidents, incidents and unsafe conditions
- Nominate a supervisor who will conduct or make arrangements for day-to-day supervision of the student
- Comply with health and safety and equality legislation
- To assist in necessary risk assessment processes and define the liability and other insurance cover that will be provided for the activities of the student with regard to the student and to others who could be affected by the students actions or inactions
- Facilitate access to the student for visits by the Visiting Tutor (where appropriate)
- To participate in formative and summative performance reviews sessions with the Visiting Tutor
- To provide feedback to the University on placement delivery and process In cases of serious accidents or incidents involving the student or breaches of discipline by the student, advise and consult with the University
- The placement provider will be able to provide the required number of practice placement hours in order to facilitate students' translation of theory to practice and allow them opportunities to meet the required placement learning outcomes (see Supervised Practice Placement pack).
- The placement provider will facilitate at least two on-site tripartite meeting between the practice supervisor, student and college tutor.
- The practice placement supervisor will provide regular formal supervision to the student and will sign the supervised practice learning agreement to confirm this.

Responsibilities of the student to the Placement Provider:

- Abide by all the rules regarding health and safety requirements and other practices and procedures of the placement organisation.
- Carry out the work programme specified by the Placement Provider under the supervision of the specified supervisor(s).
- Inform the Placement Provider of any access or support needs that may require adjustments.

Responsibilities of the student to the University:

- To attend required pre-placement tutorials.
- To undergo a Garda Clearance/Police Vetting check prior to commencing their introductory placement in Year 1.
- To meet all deadlines as indicated by the supervisor and college tutor.
- To attend all meetings arranged by the college tutor or to notify both supervisor and college tutor beforehand of unavailability.
- To start and finish work on dates agreed with the supervisor and college tutor.
- To always behave in a professional manner, as a representative of the TU Dublin during the practice placement.

Tripartite Meetings:

At least one on-site tripartite meeting between the practice supervisor, student and college tutor will be held in Year 1.

At least two on-site tripartite meeting between the practice supervisor, student and college tutor will be held in Year 2.

At least two on-site tripartite meeting between the practice supervisor, student and college tutor will be held in Year 3.

At least one on-site tripartite meeting between the practice supervisor, student and college tutor will be held in Year 4.

Signatories:

I have read, understand and agree to abide by the above conditions.

Placement provider

Name _____

Role _____ **Date** _____

College tutor

Name _____

Role _____ **Date** _____

Student

Name _____

Year _____ **Date** _____

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