

# **Institute of Health**

## **Placement Handbook for BA and MA Social Work Programmes**

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This handbook is a guide to the placement element of the programme you are studying. The formal regulations applying to the programme are the University of Cumbria Academic Regulations –accessible at the [Academic Quality and Development Service website](#) and the Programme Specification which can be found on the Programme Blackboard site. In the event of any information contained in this handbook conflicting with that in the [Academic Regulations](#) then the latter should be taken as the definitive version.

The information contained within this handbook may be subject to amendments and revisions. Please be informed that any revisions will supersede the information contained herein.

**Important Note:** The University has taken all reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this placement handbook and will use all reasonable endeavours to deliver programmes in accordance with the descriptions set out within the handbook. Nevertheless, circumstances outside the University's reasonable control may arise which limit its ability to deliver the programme as described. For example, the placement arrangements may vary from student to student depending on the circumstances of the particular placement provider, including if a particular placement provider were to withdraw or vary the conditions of the placement; there may be changes in the availability, or withdrawal of funding. Where reasonable and appropriate to do so, the University will make all reasonable endeavours to put in place alternative arrangements to achieve the relevant learning outcomes, and provided the University does so, it will not be responsible to the student for any failure to provide the programme in accordance with the placement handbook.

<b>Contents</b>		<b>Page number</b>
1.	Introduction to Social Work Placements	4
2.	Placement Requirements	5
3.	Placement Process	7
4.	Placement Allocation Process	8
5.	Travel, Accommodation and Expenses	12
6.	Placement Timing in Programme of Study	13
7.	Learning Outcomes	14
8.	Placement Days and Attendance	15
9.	Assessment of Placement	18
10.	People with Lived Experience of Social Work	22
11.	Placement Portfolio	23
12.	Roles and Responsibilities	30
13.	Placements causing concern	36
14.	Communication	39
15.	Access to Library Support and Learning Resources	40
16.	Placement Evaluation and Quality Assurance	41
17.	Health and Safety and Student Wellbeing	42
18.	Whistleblowing, Safeguarding and Complaints	44
19.	Disclosure and Barring Checks	46
20.	Reasonable Adjustments	47
21.	Social Work Programme Team	48

# 1. Introduction to Social Work Placements

Welcome to the Placement Handbook for BA and MA students at the University of Cumbria.

As a University, we are committed to a vibrant and sustainable learning environment for all social work students, and thus contributing to the advancement of excellent social work practice in Cumbria and beyond. We recognise the importance of working in collaborative partnerships to provide high-quality practice learning opportunities for students to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of safe and ethical social work practice.

Students must spend at least 200 days in practice over the course of their social work programme. 30 of these days are spent developing skills for practice at University, also known as 'skills days'. These are embedded in the Professional Skills for Practice modules across each year of the programme for both BA and MA students.

Placements are offered in at least two practice settings, which will provide contrasting experiences to the student. A minimum of one placement will be within a statutory setting, which will enable the student to experience and develop skills in undertaking statutory social work tasks that involve high-risk decision making and legal interventions.

The programme placements are not credit bearing modules, rather they are qualificatory practice units and as such they will receive a 'pass' or 'fail' mark, rather than a specific grade. Whilst it is essential student complete at least 200 days on placement, the emphasis is also on ensuring the student has suitable learning opportunities that enable them to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the [Professional Standards](#) for social work, and that they are able to demonstrate their capability against the relevant level of the [Professional Capabilities Framework](#).

This Placement Handbook contains information relating to the BA and MA Social Work placements. It is intended for students who are working towards demonstrating their capabilities against the Professional Capabilities Framework, and the Practice Educators, On-Site Supervisors and Link Lecturers who support and assess them as to whether they are ready to meet the requirements of the Professional Standards for social work. To read further information about the University's Placement Learning Policy, please follow this [link](#).

We wish to thank everyone who is involved in practice learning opportunities for social work students. We value all that you do and look forward to working with you to continue to prepare the future generation of social work practitioners.

**The University of Cumbria Social Work Programme Team**

## 2. Placement Requirements

### Placement requirements for students

Placements provide students with learning opportunities to enable them to apply the knowledge and skills that they have gained in their social work programme so far, and demonstrate their ability, under supervision, to meet the relevant level of capability as outlined in the Professional Capabilities Framework. They require learning opportunities that enable them to:

- Undertake appropriate social work tasks safely and effectively
- Apply theoretical, evidence-based learning to their practice
- Work towards meeting the professional standards
- Manage complex work and deal with risk
- Work in a non-discriminatory manner
- Build relationships with colleagues, including those from other professions
- Build relationships with people with lived experience of social work

Students will have different experiences in their first and final placements to ensure they can appreciate the breadth and depth of social work practice in a contemporary context. Learning opportunities will reflect the level of responsibility and autonomy that is appropriate for the placement setting, the individual student and their place in their programme.

Social Work England, the regulator for the social work profession in England, outline some common learning opportunities during placement as:

- Formal assessment processes, including observation, gathering of information, analysis, application of appropriate theory, reporting and development of recommendations
- Formal processes considering risk and/or safeguarding for child protection, for practice in mental health or with vulnerable adults
- Presentation of outcomes of formal assessment processes, including analysis of risk and proposed recommendations, at panels, meetings and courts
- Opportunities to reflect on, discuss and analyse appropriate use of authority
- Identification and assessment of ethical dilemmas in practice and any personal and professional implications or conflicts
- Application and understanding of legal frameworks relevant for social work practice
- Application and understanding of key policies, for example data protection, consent and confidentiality, and understanding how organisational policies impact on service delivery to people with lived experience of social work
- Liaison and joint working with statutory services and other agencies and professionals, such as Children's Services and Mental Health Services, and analysing and managing any tensions that arise
- Communicating and engaging with and supporting people with lived experience of social work
- Managing and resolving conflict and challenging behaviour

- Accessing resources with and on behalf of people with lived experience of social work, for example benefits that they are eligible for
- Signposting and referring people with lived experience of social work to other services and organisations, for example health services and housing services
- Working with people with lived experience of social work who are subject to legal orders, such as children looked after or people with community sentences

Final placements (100 days) must prepare students for the statutory aspects of a social worker's role. Social Work England define a statutory placement as one which:

- Requires students to carry out tasks that involve high-risk decision-making and legal interventions
- Takes place in a local authority setting or settings delivering delegated statutory functions on behalf of the local authority
- Involves a sufficient amount of work on either s17 and s47 cases (under the Children Act 1989) or on delivering requirements of the Care Act 2014 and Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Requires case records to be updated by the student, under appropriate supervision

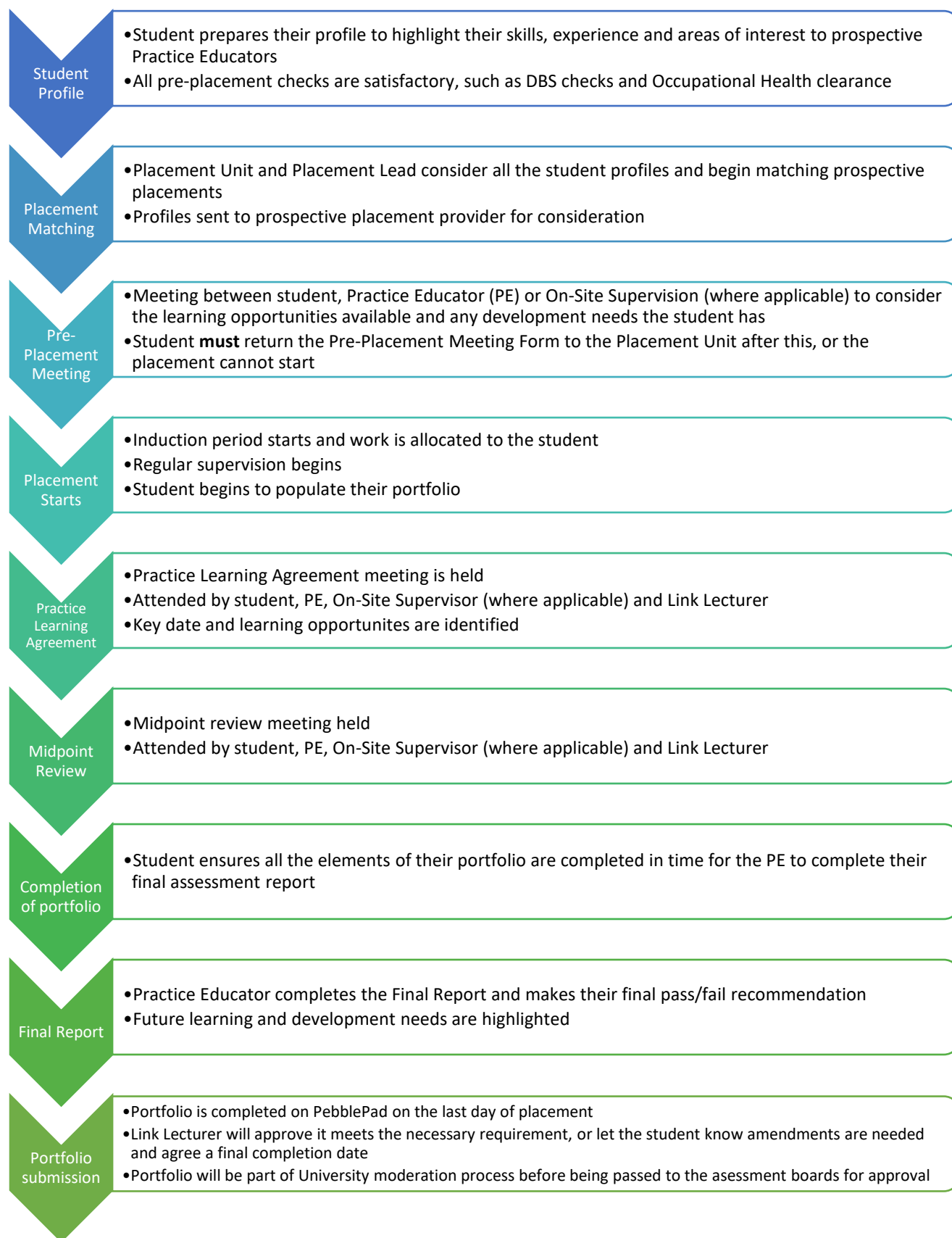
### **Placement requirements for placement setting**

Each placement setting will undergo an audit, completed jointly with the Placement Lead, which is updated annually. This is part of the quality assurance process of practice learning at the University of Cumbria, and highlights whether a placement is suitable for social work students and at which level of study.

Each placement must be supervised and assessed by a suitably qualified Practice Educator who will provide the student with appropriate level of support and supervision. Students should be expected to learn from their experiences on placement, including any early set-backs. If the Practice Educator is offsite, the student must have an On-Site Supervisor who will provide them with day-to-day supervision and support.

Allocation of workload to students will take into account their particular capability, the stage of their study and be reviewed regularly to ensure it is meeting their learning needs. Students will not hold case responsibility for formal assessment processes that include risk/safeguarding/child protection and arrangements must be made to ensure that accountability for such work is clear.

### 3. Placement Process



## 4. Placement Allocation Process

The University's Institute of Health Placement Unit together with the Placement Lead, are responsible for the administration and allocation of practice placements.

The majority of the practice placements are located within Cumbria, with some in Lancashire, the North East and Dumfries and Galloway. Placements further afield **may be** possible for a students' final placement subject to a number of conditions and will be considered on a case-by-case basis by your Personal Tutor, the Placement Lead and the relevant Programme Lead.

Care is taken to ensure that as far as is possible there is a fair allocation of placements.

Placement allocation is dependent on the following factors:

- Individual student's circumstances
- Exceptional personal circumstances
- Previous practice placement location / experience

### Process

The first stage in locating a placement is for the student to complete the 'Student Profile form' at an appropriate stage in the academic year. **It is important that students complete their Profile form comprehensively and professionally and submit it by the given deadline.** This is so the Placement Unit has the relevant information and sufficient timeframe to organise your placement. Any delay in returning this will mean students are not matched to placement offers with their cohort, which may delay their placement and subsequent progression on the programme.

The information on the Profile form will assist the Placement Lead and the Placement Unit to match students to placements, and the profile will be forwarded to prospective placement providers as appropriate. For a final placement request, a copy of the first placement Final Report will also be sent to the prospective placement provider, along with the profile. This is to ensure progression of individual learning needs across the two placements.

Students are also asked to declare any potential conflicts of interest, such as previous personal involvement with relevant agencies, employment or close friends/family employed/volunteering at the agency. This is to ensure impartiality of assessment and also to avoid any confusion for people involved with services. Failure to disclose such information may impact on placement progression.

Placement allocation can take many weeks, as each student must be matched to a placement across a range of agencies and different services, and each external agency will have their own processes to follow, which can vary considerably. Students will not all hear about their placement location on the same day. Students are advised to contact the Placement Lead for updates or for any queries regarding this process.



Once a student is matched to a placement, the Placement Unit will email the student profile information to the placement provider and ask them to confirm:

a) They can still accommodate a student within the given dates

b) that they are happy for the matched student to make contact to arrange a pre- placement meeting

### **Informing students of their placement allocation**

Once the placement provider has confirmed that they will offer a pre-placement meeting to a student, the Placement Unit will notify students by email and ask them to log into 'InPlace' to view the details.

Students can access their placement details through InPlace, the University's Student Placement System. To access the system students will need to log into My.Cumbria using the Student tab on the main University of Cumbria Website, select 'Placements Information' then select 'Placement Allocations'.

The placement record will be viewable on InPlace in your placement list with a 'confirmed' status, and the allocation group name will contain 'interview' e.g. [SW BA Year 2 Social Work Interview \(3YR\) 20-21](#). The student is then responsible for making contact and arranging a pre-placement meeting.

We endeavour to notify all students 4 weeks prior to the timetabled date of the start of placement, however if for any reason there is a delay in confirming your pre-placement meeting, the Placement Unit will keep you informed.

### **Pre-placement meetings**

In some cases, this will be an informal discussion and in others, it will be a more formal interview. This will depend on the individual Practice Educator and practice setting, so students should prepare in the following ways:

- Consider preparing for this meeting as you would an interview, so research the agency, the people it works with, who else the agency works with and what the current issues are in their area of work. The university is unable to provide you with this detailed information
- Be enthusiastic and interested – make a good first impression to increase your chances of being offered a placement
- Consider what questions the Practice Educator may wish to ask you to find out more about you
- Prepare any questions you have for the Practice Educator
- If the meeting is being held virtually, ensure you have good internet connection, are somewhere private and consider blurring your background to increase your privacy and ensure professionalism

Students are required to take a Pre-Placement Meeting Form with them to the initial meeting with the prospective placement provider, which **must** be completed and returned to the Placement Unit (this form will be provided when the student is notified of the potential placement).

This meeting aims to achieve the following:

- Complete the Pre-Placement Meeting Form and make a decision about whether the placement can go ahead
- Identify what learning opportunities are available
- Resolve any practical issues or queries that either party may have, including working hours, expectations, dress code, parking and so on
- Arrange a date for the placement to start if an offer is made.

It is only after the pre-placement meeting has taken place, where the prospective placement provider has agreed via the Pre-Placement Meeting Form that the placement can go ahead, and the student has successfully returned the Pre-Placement Meeting Form to Placement Unit, can the placement be considered as 'confirmed'. Students must also have cleared all necessary checks to go on placement, such as have a valid DBS check and Occupational Health Clearance.

Upon receipt of the completed Pre-Placement Meeting Form in the Placement Unit, the interview placement record will be changed to 'completed'. There is a separate allocation group for the actual placement e.g. [SW BA Year 2 Social Work \(3YR\) 20-21](#) in which a 'confirmed' record will be created. This will detail the start and expected end date, the Practice Educator, the placement supervisor (if different), and the University Link lecturer. The Placement Unit will once again notify the student by email.

**Please note: Students should not attend placement until they have a confirmed placement on InPlace. Students will not be considered insured to be on placement and days completed will not count towards their total placement days.**

If it is decided at the pre-placement meeting that the placement **will not go ahead**, the Pre-Placement Meeting Form should be used to provide feedback and returned to the Placement Unit. At this point, the allocation process will start again.

### **Creating new placements**

We are keen for students (and others) to suggest new placement areas, but please be aware that the placement area would need an audit to see if it meets the educational requirements of the programme, and it is not a given that you (the student) would be able to utilise the placement yourself.

Any potential placement information given to the Placement Unit is passed directly to the Placement Lead who arranges and carries out an audit. If the placement is deemed appropriate, the placement details will then be added to the Placement Unit database for future use.

All Cumbria County Council placements are arranged via their own Placement Co-ordinator and not through individual teams. For this reason, please **DO NOT** attempt to arrange your own Cumbria County Council placements, even if you have connections in individual teams who would like to welcome you as a student.

### **Placements at workplaces**

We do not routinely place students at their existing workplace. This is due to issues around role confusion for all involved, especially the people with whom the service works with. It also raises potential conflict of interest issues, such as Practice Educators feeling they are unable to raise concerns about practice with the student if they are also a colleague. There are exceptional occasions this may be considered with agreement of the Placement Lead. This also applies to any voluntary work students may have.

### **Payment for placements and additional paid work**

Social work students do not receive payment for placements. Students should also not agree to do 'bank' work or additional hours at the same agency as their placements outside of their placement hours, due to the issues of role confusion and conflict of interest as outlined above. If there is any doubt, this must be discussed with the Placement Lead. Progression of placements may be at risk if there are concerns in relation to this.

**Students must accept placement allocation unless there are exceptional and specific reasons not to. Failure to take up an allocation may be considered as the student withdrawing from the course.**

## 5. Travel, Accommodation and Expenses

The Placement Unit allocates placements to limit travel to a maximum of **within 1.5 hours in each direction** of a student's home base.

Arranging transportation to and from the practice placement is the responsibility of each individual student.

Most placements require students to use a car. Where this is the case, the student **MUST** ensure that they have adequate business insurance cover prior to the practice placement commencing. A copy of the insurance policy must be seen by the placement prior to the PLA meeting.

In most cases when students are out on placement, the placement will reimburse any costs for any work-related duties that are undertaken. This will be agreed at the initial placement meeting/Practice Learning Agreement meeting.

Any childcare costs incurred whilst out on placement are met entirely by the student.

The cost of additional insurance cover where a car is required for practice placements is met entirely by the student.

Replacement DBS costs are met entirely by the student.

If students wish to take a placement in another county, or wish to relocate while completing placement, this should be discussed with the Placement Lead in the first instance, and every attempt will be made to accommodate out of area placements where this is possible.

If a suitable placement cannot be identified within a 1.5 hour travel radius to the students home, accommodation may be available at our campus in Lancaster, which could be negotiated to access 100-day placements in the Lancaster area. This only occurs in specific circumstances, and only with the agreement of the student, Principal Lecturer, Placement Lead and Head of Department.

For further information please visit the University website on [placements for Institute of Health students](#).

## 6. Placement Timing in Programme of Study

Practice placements are timetabled into the programme in a way which aims to enable students to integrate theories learned in the academic setting with the practical experiences gained on placement. They provide students with the opportunity to work closely with professionals, people with lived experience of social work and carers in real-life settings. People with lived experience of social work, through their contact with students, have the opportunity to provide direct feedback in terms of students' abilities, effectiveness and professionalism. Reflection on practice placement learning is an integral element of linking theory to practice both in the university and whilst on placement. This enables students to meet the necessary professional and academic requirements to apply for registration with Social Work England.

Each placement module will have a module learning plan, which will cover the taught lectures. This will include pre-placement lectures and a recall day, when students return to university mid-way through their placement. Some cohorts will also have an end of placement review day. These days count towards days on placement and therefore attendance at them is mandatory and students and Practice Educators should protect this time from placement duties.

Please note that due to a high demand for placement opportunities, the University cannot guarantee that placements will start on the date specified in any published material. There are several factors which can impact on the availability and timing of placements. A student may find that the start of their placement delayed and on occasion, this delay may be of an extended duration.

**Please note that start dates for placements are approximate**, as there may be several factors that impact on whether a placement can start when it is timetabled to.

### BA Social Work

Year	Level of study	Module code	Placement days	Approximate start date	30 Skills Day delivered over the three years
BA1	Level 4	-	-	-	
BA2	Level 5	HSWG 9005	70 days First Placement	13.11.23	
BA3	Level 6	HSWG 9006	100 days Final Placement	08.01.24	

### MA Social Work

Year	Level of study	Module code	Placement days	Approximate start date	30 Skills Day delivered over the two years
MA1	Level 7	HSWG 9007	70 days First Placement		
MA2	Level 7	HSWG 9008	100 days Final Placement	08.01.24	

## **7. Learning Outcomes**

Learning Outcomes for all placements are outlined on the specific Module Descriptor Form on the relevant module Blackboard site. They are also detailed in the student's portfolio. They must be met in full for a student to pass their placement module. All students, regardless of disability, will need to be able to meet the professional competencies that are required by the different professions which are subject to national regulations and criteria. The University is not required, and is unable to, adjust the required professional competencies or level of competency.

The University is supportive of providing reasonable adjustments related to assessment methods, demonstrations of the required skills and/or learning outcomes, and individual guidance is available on reasonable adjustments that may be available to support you to meet the relevant professional guidelines.

## 8. Placement Days and Attendance

### Placement Hours

Students are expected to undertake placements on a full-time basis. A placement day is usually no less than 7 hours, plus a lunch break, although exact hours and working patterns may vary depending on the placement provider. Please note that social work placements are counted in days, not hours. Placements must be accommodated within a limited amount of space within the academic timetable, often alongside other modules. There is therefore no facility to attend placements on a part-time basis. It is not possible to reduce the number of placement days by working longer hours, although individual arrangements should be made to enable students to take time back if they occasionally work additional hours.

In some circumstances, where it is normal working practice, students may be asked to be involved in evening and weekend working, shift working or bank holiday cover. Where this will cause difficulties, students should discuss this with the Placement Lead at the earliest opportunity. In all settings, students are not part of the normal staff team quota, so should not be used to cover for shortages or to respond to pressures being experienced by the service, except where this would be consistent with meeting learning needs.

A record is kept of days undertaken during each practice placement and an Attendance Record must be completed by the student and signed by both the student and Practice at the end of the practice placement. The student is responsible for maintaining this record accurately on an ongoing basis in their e-portfolio. This includes placements which have ended early for any reason.

Full attendance at University Recall Days is also mandatory, as these count towards days on placement. The Placement Lead will notify the Practice Educator and Link Lecturer if a student is absent for these sessions. Students and Practice Educators should protect this time from other placement duties.

### Reflective Study Time

Whilst on placement, students need to develop knowledge of theories, research, policies and procedures relevant to social work practice. They need to do this in parallel with gaining day-to-day experience. It is also essential that students engage in critical reflection and evaluate their practice the practice of others. Therefore, time is to be allocated each week away from the workplace for the student to reflect, self-evaluate and analyse placement related issues, and to ensure their portfolio is up to date. The student is to take evidence of this reflection to supervision for discussion.

Whilst one day per fortnight is possible, half a day per week is recommended. The timing of this half day will be dependent on the practice placement demands and should be negotiated with the Practice Educator/On-site Supervisor. Students should

expect that this study time will need to be moved on occasion to reflect the unpredictable nature of social work.

This time is included in the placement hours, and so it is essential that this time is used appropriately as it is part of students' eligibility to register with the professional regulator. Reflective study time cannot be accrued to enable a longer period of time absent from placement, or to finish the placement early.

Students should not be given additional reflective study time by placements. If additional days are granted or days are swapped about, these must be recorded accurately on the student's attendance record in their portfolio and additional placement days made up to cover any absences.

Reflective study time, or time on placement, should not be used by the student to catch up on their academic work.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory for all placement days. Attendance and punctuality are essential aspects of the professional behaviour expected whilst on practice placement. Non-attendance on placement may mean that students cannot achieve the learning outcomes for the placement. This may result in a failed placement or a referral to the Fitness to Practise panel.

Students must contact their Practice Educator to notify them of any absences on their first day of absence. Absences of more than 3 days must be reported to the student's Link Lecturer. Absences of more than 5 days must be supported by a fit note.

Unauthorised absences will be notified to the Link Lecturer and Personal Tutor for discussion in relation to learning. Please note absence records may be used by the Personal Tutor when writing references for employment.

Any absences will need to be made up to ensure days on placement meet the minimum requirements.

If the On-Site Supervisor or Practice Educator has any concerns or queries about a student's attendance, absences or use of reflective study time, they should raise this with the Link Lecturer at the earliest opportunity. Practice Educators sign the student's portfolio to confirm the accuracy of their attendance on placement, so it is important they are ensured of this, especially for Off-Site Practice Educators.

There is a clear process for reporting any sickness or absences and the [Sickness and Absence Policy](#) and should be read and adhered to at all times.

If you feel that there have been extenuating circumstances that have affected the success of your achievement on placement, you should refer to the [Extenuating Circumstances](#) procedures.



**Planned Leave**

Ordinarily, it is expected that students will not take any holiday leave during their agreed placement dates. If absences are anticipated, they should be agreed and recorded during the Practice Learning Agreement meeting. If the Practice Educator has any planned leave during the placement period, the dates should also be noted at the Practice Learning Agreement meeting and arrangements for cover outlined.

Students should also be aware that as no guarantee can be given for start and end dates for placements, any holidays booked for when they anticipate their placement will be finished are at their own risk. Unexpected issues can arise during placements, meaning that end dates are unavoidable extended, so careful consideration should be given to commitments during and after placement.

## 9. Assessment of Placement

During the programme the two placements will be delivered in contrasting settings, allowing the student to work with different people and with different methods and models. In the final placement the student must undertake social work tasks involving statutory interventions.

On placement, students will be guided, supervised and assessed in their learning and development by a Practice Educator. All Practice Educators must be registered social workers with Social Work England and must have or be working towards their Stage 1 or Stage 2 Professional Standards for Practice Educators (PEPS, 2022). It may be that the Practice Educator will have their own mentor to support their development, and at times may have their practice observed whilst supporting the student.

In addition to meeting the Learning Outcomes of the placement module, the Practice Educator will assess the students using the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) during their placement, whilst also taking account of Social Work England Professional Standards.

### Social Work England

Social Work England is the regulatory body for social workers. The Professional Standards (2020) and Education and Training Standards (2021) outline the threshold of standards necessary for safe and effective practice within the profession. These documents set out what a social worker in England must know, understand and be able to do following the completion of their social work degree, and how the social work curriculum must meet the standards.

### Professional Capabilities Framework (BASW)

The PCF is a qualitative assessment of core capabilities that a social worker must demonstrate at every level of their career. The PCF has nine domains: Professionalism, Values and Ethics, Diversity & Equalities, Rights & Justice, Knowledge, Critical Reflection and Analysis, Skills & Interventions, Contexts & Organisations, and Professional Leadership and can be accessed [here](#).

The levels that relate to social work students are highlighted below, and reflect the progression that is expected of student social workers as they move through their programme:

#### Entry requirements for social work education

By the point of entry to social work qualifying programmes, prospective students/candidates should demonstrate awareness of social context for social work practice, awareness of self, ability to develop rapport and potential to develop relevant knowledge, skills and values through professional training.

<b>Readiness for direct practice</b>
By the point of assessment of readiness for direct practice (prior to first placement), students should demonstrate basic communication skills, ability to engage with users, capacity to work as a member of an organisation, willingness to learn from feedback and supervision, and demonstrate basic social work values, knowledge and skills in order to be able to make effective use of first practice placement.
<b>End of first placement</b>
By the end of the first placement, students should demonstrate effective use of knowledge, skills and commitment to core values in social work in a given setting in predominantly less complex situations, with supervision and support. They will have demonstrated capacity to work with people and situations where there may not be simple clear-cut solutions.
<b>End of last placement/completion</b>
By the end of qualifying programmes, students should have demonstrated the knowledge, skills and values to work with a range of user groups, and the ability to undertake a range of tasks at a foundation level, the capacity to work with more complex situations; they should be able to work more autonomously, whilst recognising that the final decision will still rest with their supervisor; they will seek appropriate support and supervision. These capabilities will have been demonstrated through the last placement together with the final assessment of other work in the qualifying programme.

### **How students are assessed on placement**

Assessment of performance on practice placement is an integral part of the social work programme. Its purpose is to ensure that students develop professional skills and operate competently within the practice setting at the expected level.

Social work placements are designed to be progressive and increasingly demanding. The aim is that as students progress, they will be increasingly able to apply the theories learned in university to the practice placement setting. They will develop skills which are transferable between practice placements and be able to integrate experiences, knowledge and skills between practice placement and their university-based education.

We refer to Stone's (2018) TAPE model (Transparency of Assessment in Practice Education) to consider all the different ways students are assessed on placement:



Stone, C. (2018), 'Transparency of Assessment in Practice Education: the TAPE Model'. *Social Work Education*, 37 (8). Pp. 977-994S

Practice Educators will use a range of assessment methods to assess student development, including, but not limited to: observation of practice; Critical Analysis of Practice; feedback from people with lived experience of social work, colleagues and other professionals; engagement with reflective supervision; professionalism, written work and communication skills.

Students need to be given informal feedback during placement (e.g. via supervision sessions or instruction whilst performing activities) by the Practice Educator and/or On-Site Supervisor. Link Lecturers also offer feedback in relation to submitted portfolio evidence, such as Critical Analysis of Practice. Feedback is a dynamic process and students should take increasingly more responsibility for evaluating their own performance during practice placements. This will enable them to improve performance, progression and establish on-going development needs.

The Practice Educator will make their recommendation within the final report as to whether the student should pass or fail their placement.

In addition to the Practice Educator's recommendation, both programmes require a **placement portfolio** to be fully completed and submitted via PebblePad on the last day of each placement. The Link Lecturer will then comment on whether or not the student's portfolio meets the minimum requirements of the university, and if they have met the Learning Outcomes for the placement module.

**Both of these elements must be a pass for the student to have passed their placement.**

If the Link Lecturer feels that the student needs to review any of their portfolio evidence in order to meet these minimum requirements and therefore pass the placement, this will be raised by the Link Lecturer with both the student and the Practice Educator and review tasks and completion dates agreed.

## 10. People with Lived Experience of Social Work

It is essential that the work students do on placement with people with lived experience of social work does not do any harm or cause any increase in risk. For this reason, students will only work within their level of skills and experience. This will vary between placements and students, although it is expected their level of responsibility and independence will increase as placements progress.

It is also imperative that people with lived experience of social work are informed that students are working with them. They should also be aware that they have the right to refuse to take part in student learning without this prejudicing their care or ongoing assessment. Where students are directly involved in caring for people or observing meetings for example, specific consent needs to be obtained from the person to ensure they are comfortable with this. This consent needs to include information on how the student is being supervised, and gained without the student being present, so the person does not feel under any pressure to give consent.

## 11. Placement Portfolio

Students are required to keep a digital portfolio of evidence for each placement. Portfolios should develop and be updated across the course of the placement and be fully complete and uploaded by the last day of each placement.

There are no extensions available for portfolios. Failure to complete the portfolio on time could result in a failed placement. If students are unable to complete their portfolio due to delays outside of their control (e.g. Practice Educator delays), they must contact their Link Lecturer to discuss.

The portfolio will be completed on PebblePad, the University's e-portfolio system and personal learning space. Guidance is provided within the PebblePad portfolio as to the specific documentation required for each portfolio. More information can be found about PebblePad [here](#). All students, Practice Educators, On-Site Supervisors and Link Lecturers will have access to the relevant student's PebblePad portfolio and will receive a briefing on this before the placement commences.

It is the student's responsibility to upload a completed and professional portfolio, ensuring sensitive data is protected. Any breach of confidentiality may be considered as a Fitness to Practise Issue.

### Evidence to be included in the Placement Portfolio

#### Practice Learning Agreement (PLA)

A PLA meeting should take place in the first two weeks of the placement commencing. It will be attended by the Practice Educator, the On-Site Supervisor (if there is one), the Link Lecturer and the student. The PLA details the student's learning needs, the specific learning opportunities available and how assessment will occur. It sets out the practical arrangements for the placement, the roles and responsibilities and is an important document outlining the obligations and responsibilities of the various parties involved in the student placement.

The student should arrange this meeting and will record the outcome of the discussions directly in their portfolio on PebblePad. This must be completed **within 5 working days** of the PLA meeting. All attendees should sign the PLA on PebblePad within 10 day working days of the meeting.

#### Supervision Agreement and Agenda and Record of Supervision

Students, Practice Educators and On-Site Supervisors (where applicable) should discuss what supervision will look like, what the objectives are and the practical arrangements for it at the start of the placement and record their agreement. The template in PebblePad Portfolio is a starting point for this discussion and can be added to where necessary.

A record of when supervision took place and the duration must be recorded on the 'Record of Supervision' form. The student is to receive the equivalent of a minimum of

one-hour formal supervision per five placement days. If supervision needs to be rearranged, this should be clearly recorded. Students are required to inform their Link Lecturer at the earliest opportunity if these minimum requirements are not adhered to.

Supervision notes are **not** to be included in the portfolio, but to be kept safe in case needed at a later point.

### **Induction Checklist**

Placement providers are expected to provide an induction for the student, who must access the placement policies, procedures and practical arrangements during this induction period. The student should indicate the date that they have read the relevant information or completed the task using the Induction Checklist in the PebblePad Portfolio.

### **Confidentiality Statement**

In the course of a student's placement, they will gather sensitive information that they may wish to refer to in support of their progression on placement. Ensuring that people who use services, their carers and professionals cannot be identified by others who have no need to know who they are is an essential part of demonstrating respect for others. It is also critical to demonstrate a student's capability against the PCF and Professional Standards for social work. Students should never discuss confidential information about people with anyone who does not have a legitimate reason to have such information.

Great care should also be used when using social networking sites and students are reminded not to comment about their placement, the people who work there or anything about the people they are working with, even on other social work sites. Students should be mindful about their professional identity at all times on social media. See the university's [social media guidance](#) for further information.

In submitting a placement portfolio, all identifying features of people using services with whom students have worked **must** be deleted or fully anonymised so that it would not be possible to identify any individuals. This includes names, addresses, dates of birth, any services people have been involved with and any other identifying details. Professionals should also not be identified (except where they are the Observer and completing the Observation of Practice), but referred to as e.g. 'health visitor'. Organisations should also be anonymised e.g. 'local authority in the North of England'.

Students must exercise great care to ensure this is done throughout all the work submitted in your portfolio, and will include a signed confidentiality statement to acknowledge this. Students must not include any documents belonging to the placement agency in their portfolio.

When names are anonymised, it is best practice for a student and Practice Educator to agree how to reference people at the start of the work, whether this is false names, initials or codes, and use this referencing throughout. A person's real initials must **not** be used.



## Critical Analysis of Practice (CAP)

The aim of completing the Critical Analysis of Practice is to help students engage in critical thinking and critical reflection in social work practice\*\*. The CAP is a tool that the student uses to help make the connection between theory and practice.

Practice Educators will use completed CAP(s) to assess skills of critical reflection, knowledge, values, capabilities, professionalism and from this consider any further learning needs. Students are expected to share CAPs with their Practice Educator and/or On-Site Supervisor during supervision sessions and seek feedback on their work.

The CAP is **not** to be completed at the end of the placement retrospectively.

There are no maximum number of templates that can be completed, and if the Practice Educator feels that the student needs to complete additional CAPs, or other reflective work to evidence their skills, then the student will be required to complete more.

The CAP can be completed on a range of work. For example, it could be a one-off piece of work, a longer-term intervention or an event that has challenged the student's values and so on. It is often helpful to consider something that has not gone as planned, as rich learning can emerge from reflection on this. If the CAP is generated from the same situation as an Observation of Practice, it must consider a different aspect of learning or reflection on the incident, rather than it being repetitive and cut and paste from the Observation.

The intention is for the student to engage in critical thinking; therefore, it is the quality of this that is important rather than the number of words written. The student should not be overly descriptive in their writing; concentrate instead on the depth of critical analysis. Whilst the CAPs are not academically marked, students are expected to write at the relevant level for their programme, and reference appropriately using the Harvard reference system where research and other sources of evidence have been used.

For both the MA and BA Programme, the minimum requirement is:

- During a 70-Day placement students must successfully complete a minimum of **two** CAPs. One of these **must** have been completed prior to the mid-point review.
- During a 100-Day placement students must successfully completed a minimum of **one** CAP, which **must** be completed prior to the mid-point review.

\*\* Remember that the word 'critical' has different meanings depending on the context. 'Critical thinking' involves analysis and being objective. In social work, 'critical reflection' relates to power and other social dynamics.

### **Observations of Practice**

There is no upper limit to the number of observations that can be undertaken, and Practice Educators may require students to undertake more than the minimum to demonstrate their progress against the Professional Capabilities Framework. The minimum university requirements are:

- First placement students are to submit **two** observations
- Final placement students are to submit **three** observations

One observation **must** be uploaded to the student's portfolio on PebblePad prior to the mid-point review meeting.

To reflect the breadth of social work practice, a range of experiences should be observed. One observation may be in a multi-professional meeting or other professional setting, but the other observations need to include engagement with people with lived experience of social work. Please ensure consent is obtained from the person prior to the observation.

The Practice Educator may delegate one observation to another colleague where appropriate.

Please note – for simulated/virtual placements, observations of practice must have a focus on people with lived experience.

### **Midpoint Review Meeting**

The midpoint review is an opportunity to review the Practice Learning Agreement, consider the student's progress and identify any areas of development that need to be met during the remainder of the placement, using the PCF as a framework. A key question is whether the learning opportunities are adequate and appropriate, and the evidence that will be used to support any placement assessment recommendation is robust and from a variety of sources. Its overall aims are to:

- Support and facilitate learning
- Support the Practice Educator
- Provide an opportunity to liaise between university and practice settings
- Ensure parity of assessment across the practice placement sites
- Provide a means of monitoring if learning outcomes are not being met
- Provide an occasion for problem solving
- Provide an opportunity for mutual education
- Strengthen the relationship between the workplace and the university

The student will deliver a **presentation** (around 10 minutes) to their Practice Educator, On-Site Supervisor (where relevant) and Link Lecturer reflecting on their progress, using the PCF as a framework, and identifying their needs for the remainder of the placement.

This will be done at the start of the meeting and is designed to be an informal presentation. The student can present this in any way they choose, using a reflective model of their choice if they wish to do so. If they wish to upload any evidence they have prepared, there is the facility to do so.

### **Preparation**

- The Midpoint Review meeting is to be attended by the student, Practice Educator, On-Site Supervisor (where applicable) and Link Lecturer
- If any significant concerns have been identified about the placement, these should have been raised and discussed as an ongoing issue, rather than 'saved' for the midpoint review meeting
- Before the midpoint review meeting there must be at least one **Critical Analysis of Practice** and one **Direct Observation of Practice** submitted to the student's portfolio on PebblePad. The Practice Educator must have had the opportunity to review these
- In preparation for the midpoint review, **Section One** should be completed by the student, Practice Educator and On-Site Supervisor (where applicable). The Link Lecturer will complete **Section Three** during the meeting and **Section Four** will be discussed and agreed during the meeting (the student will record this on their portfolio).

### **Feedback from Professionals and People with Lived Experience**

Feedback from people the student has worked with must be obtained regularly during the placement and the student must reflect on the outcome of this. Feedback can be verbal, non-verbal, or written. Feedback is to be obtained after the observations of practice and CAPs wherever possible, and the Practice Educator and student must consider how additional regular feedback is to be obtained.

How feedback is obtained, and how often to gather feedback, will be different for each placement. At least one piece of feedback from a person with lived experience needs to be included in the student's portfolio.

It is also important to gather evidence from other professionals who have worked with the student, with the student reflecting on this and how it has impacted on their practice. At least one piece of feedback from a professional needs to be included in the student's portfolio.

In total, **three pieces of feedback** must be included in the portfolio.

### **Final Review Meeting**

There will be a final review meeting held towards the end of the placement, ideally in the last week. This is designed to be a reflective session to review progress, focus on

the student's future learning and development needs, address any outstanding issues with the portfolio and celebrate the student's success.

As the focus of the meeting is on reflective discussion, only a summary record will be made by the Link Lecturer, with the content of the discussion feeding into the Final Report.

### **Final Report**

The final report document is to be completed and signed by the student and Practice Educator **by the last day of the placement.**

This report is to be completed by the Practice Educator, with input from the On-Site Supervisor where applicable. The assessment should draw on a range of evidence, including the student's Observations of Practice, Critical Analysis of Practice, feedback from people the student has worked with and other work completed by the student during the placement.

The Practice Educator will make their recommendation within the final report as to whether the student should pass or fail their placement.

### **Attendance Record**

A record is kept of days undertaken during each practice placement and an Attendance Record must be completed by the student and signed by both the student and Practice at the end of the practice placement. The student is responsible for maintaining this record accurately on an ongoing basis in their e-portfolio. This includes placements which have ended early for any reason.

### **Student QAPL Evaluation**

It is important that students have the opportunity to evaluate and feedback on their placement experience. The university is committed to obtaining feedback from all parties and then making use of this feedback to monitor the effectiveness of practice learning and implement improvements into the planning of the next cycle of practice learning. They will complete their evaluation directly onto their portfolio.

Practice Educators and/or On-Site Supervisors and Link Lecturers will also be sent separate forms which will enable them to complete an evaluation of the placement process.

Evaluations feed into the Quality Assurance for Practice Learning (QAPL) audit that is reviewed annually for all placement areas.

### **Electronic signatures**

Most signatures in the student's e-portfolio will be created electronically directly on PebblePad. The CAPs and Observations of Practice will need a 'wet signature' (a

physical signature). This can be done by scanning the signature and adding this to the Word document. If it is only possible to add an electronic signature (typed name), the student must be able to produce if requested an email from the signing professional to confirm they agree to the document.

## 12. Roles and Responsibilities

### Professional behaviour during placement

We expect the highest possible standards of behaviour and professionalism from all student social workers. All students are expected to comply with Social Work England Professional Standards and the [University of Cumbria Student Code Of Conduct](#).

The Institute for Health has developed a well-established [Fitness to Practise Policy](#) for undergraduate health professionals, which is aligned to Social Work England's requirements. Students will be expected to read, familiarise themselves and adhere to the requirements for professional behaviour and attitude at all times in university, practice placements settings and in their personal and public lives.

### Responsibilities of the Student

- Liaise with all those required to attend the Pre-Placement Meeting and return the form to the Placement Unit promptly
- Ensure any relevant tasks are completed before/during/after placement
- Be proactive and engage with the range of practice and learning opportunities provided on placement
- At all times behave in an appropriate and professional manner in relation to people with lived experience of social work, other employees in the workplace, Practice Educators and any representative from the University
- Comply with (any) norms and expectations for professional conduct in the placement setting
- Comply with any professional expectations such as dress codes (this is set by individual agencies)
- Attend pre-placement and recall sessions and become familiar with the information provided
- Show commitment to the placement provider
- Respond constructively to developmental feedback
- Engage in critical reflection on practice
- Prepare for, participate in and contribute to supervision
- Inform the University of Cumbria of any personal factors that may affect the level of risk or require adjustments
- Abide by the placement provider's health and safety requirements, policies and procedures
- Carry out the work programme specified by the placement provider
- Inform the placement provider of any health concerns or disability that may require adjustments
- Report any concerns about health and safety at their placement to the placement provider
- Report any incident or accident in which they are involved and any health and safety concerns that are not addressed by the placement provider to the University of Cumbria

- Make full use of the support offered by the University in connection with the placement opportunity, including contacting the Link Lecturer should they require additional support
- Ensure all agreed work is completed and any equipment and/or borrowed resources are returned to the placement provider
- Ensure any data or material collected whilst on placement is used appropriately and responsibly in line with the University's [Confidentiality Policy](#)
- Ensure appropriate motor insurance is in place if the student's own vehicle is to be used whilst on placement

### **Responsibilities of the Practice Educator and Placement Provider**

Practice Educators are responsible for providing a range of appropriate learning opportunities for the student; for supervision, teaching, support, advice and guidance; and for the holistic assessment of the student's capabilities using the appropriate level of the Professional Capabilities Framework. Not only do Practice Educators share their knowledge and expertise, they are also crucial as acting as positive role models in the delivery of safe, compassionate and effective social work.

Practice Educators are asked to take a holistic approach to the assessment of students, which means seeking evidence of the integration of skills, theory, ethics, values and practice. It is essential, for example, that students demonstrate that they not only know about a range of social work methods and theoretical approaches, but that they can select and make skilled use of them in practice. In assessing students, Practice Educators should capture the views of experts by experience, colleagues and other relevant professionals to inform their eventual recommendation.

Practice Educators are responsible for identifying and reviewing appropriate learning opportunities throughout the duration of the practice experience. They will ensure that the requisite number of direct observations of practice take place and are recorded on the relevant documentation by the observer. The Practice Educator is responsible for completing their sections of the placement documentation. At the end of the placement the Practice Educator will make a clear statement of the student's capability and verify the evidence submitted by the student.

If and when students experience difficulties that may impact on their successful completion, it is the Practice Educators responsibility to alert the Link Lecturer as soon as possible. Should a Practice Educator have serious concerns about a student (that may lead to termination of a student's involvement in their social work programme) they should raise these concerns immediately, follow procedures and provide information to assist in decision making.

The recommendation that a student is capable in practice (pass their placement) must be made by a registered social worker.

In addition, Practice Educators and/or placement providers are required to:

- Support the Practice Educator with the time, resources and supervision needed in their role supporting students
- Confirm in writing their health and safety arrangements as requested by the University of Cumbria
- Inform the University of Cumbria of any basic competencies that they require the student to have attained to be able to undertake the placement. These would include competencies associated with any requirements of individual professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRB)
- Plan the work or study programme and learning opportunities that are suitable to the student's PCF level and any developmental needs they have
- Provide the student with a safe and supportive learning environment that is free from oppression, harassment and exploitation
- Work with their team so students are welcomed and valued as part of the team
- Provide the student with a full and clear induction to the organisation and its working practices, including health and safety arrangements and whistleblowing procedures
- Comply with health and safety legislation
- Report to the University of Cumbria any serious incidents or accidents involving the student, or breaches of discipline by the student
- Agree placement objectives with the student on commencement of placement
- Provide supervision that meets the minimum requirements of one hour for every five placement days
- Support the student in developing their theoretical understanding of practice
- Provide timely feedback to the student on their work and complete all the necessary sections on their placement portfolio on PebblePad
- Raise concerns about student performance with the student and Link Lecturer at the earliest opportunity
- Monitor student attendance to ensure minimum attendance requirements are met
- Work with the University and the student to ensure that reasonable adjustments are implemented to facilitate access to learning on placement
- Provide relevant resources, uniform, safety equipment and PPE
- Ensure the student is aware of the nature of the work programme (e.g. hours/days/weeks required to fully complete the placement)
- Complete the Practice Educator QAPL Evaluation

### **Responsibilities of On-Site Supervisors**

If the placement does not have a Practice Educator employed on site, they will employ an Off-Site Practice Educator to work with the student, and the student will then also be allocated an On-Site Supervisor as a main point of contact. On-Site Supervisors will be responsible for the day-to-day practice of the student, and allocation of opportunities for the student to experience, develop and



demonstrate their capability within the parameters set by the Practice Learning Agreement. They should participate in the Pre-Placement Meeting, the Practice Learning Agreement meeting and the Midpoint Review meeting. They should support with the student's induction and contribute towards the assessment of the student.

On-Site Supervisors will have an understanding of the Professional Capabilities Framework and know the learning outcomes for the student, including any specific development needs they have. They will be involved in offering task-based supervision and tuition to the student, whereas the Practice Educator may focus on supporting the student to make links between theory and practice, reflect on the work undertaken and consider their ongoing learning needs and professional development.

Should an On-Site Supervisor have serious concerns about a student (that may lead to termination of a student's involvement in social work programme) they need to raise these concerns, in the first instance with the Practice Educator, and provide information to assist in decision making.

Where difficulties arise the Link Lecturer will assist all parties in working together to achieve a resolution of problems. In the event of serious difficulties arising on placement, it is the Link Lecturers responsibility to liaise with the student's Personal Tutor so that student support procedures are implemented as soon as possible.

### **Responsibilities of the Link Lecturer**

Every placement is allocated a Link Lecturer. The Link Lecturer is defined as:

*A member of the academic staff who is responsible and accountable for a named & designated placement learning area(s) in terms of ensuring their suitability as learning environments, and who also provides an agreed level of support for both the placement area and identified students who undertake a placement there. The Link Lecturer will ensure that all relevant University of Cumbria and professionally-specific policies are adhered to and enacted as required.*

The elements of the Link Lecturer role fall into the following areas:

1. Quality assurance of the placement area as a professionally appropriate and high-quality setting in which each student's learning can take place. This would normally include:
  - Undertaking placement audits in a timely & effective manner
  - Supporting the development of practice educators and practice supervisors etc. through updating activities
  - Contributing to the evaluation of placement summaries

- Contributing to external monitoring activities in a timely & effective manner
  - Responding to, and escalating concerns appropriately, in liaison with university staff
  - Liaising with Placement Lead
2. Provision of support for the staff of the placement area in facilitating and monitoring a student's learning:
- Supporting Practice Educators/On-Site Supervisor with failing and 'at risk' placements
  - Ensuring that the correct documentation is completed appropriately & that all parties are aware of their responsibilities
3. Provide support for the student's learning
- Participating in meetings as required by the programme documentation & Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)
  - Being clear about communication protocols and methods and media
  - Responding to student concerns in a transparent and responsible way
  - Ensure that the student meets the Learning Outcomes of the placement module, and raising any issues of concern with the student and Practice Educator
  - Providing constructive challenge and feedback on the student's portfolio

In addition to the above role, the Link Lecturer is required to:

- To attend a meeting to develop the Practice Learning Agreement within the first two weeks of the placement starting
- To act as a contact for both the students on placement and the placement provider, for any queries or concerns relating to placement
- To attend the student's midpoint review and address any concerns with the student and placement
- To contribute to the review of the student's learning needs and action planning should concerns be raised whilst on placement
- To attend the final review meeting to reflect on progress
- Agree the level of additional contact the student may need whilst on placement
- Approve the student's completed placement portfolio as meeting the minimum requirements of the HEI

**Please note – meetings will be held virtually unless there are exceptional reasons not to. If possible, the midpoint review meeting will be held in person.**

**Placement Lead**

The university Placement Lead, in liaison with the Placement Unit will co-ordinate placement provision and recruit and support new placements.

They will answer initial queries and complete Quality Assurance for Practice Learning audits for new and potential placements. They will work closely alongside Link Lecturers to achieve these outcomes.

The Placement Lead will also have responsibility to coordinate the training of new Practice Educators and to develop and support placements and develop peer networks.

## 13. Placements Causing Concern

Practice placements are an essential component of all social work programmes which lead to professional qualification. Students must complete both practice placements before they can be awarded a degree in social work. It is expected that students will have evidenced the ability to meet the majority of the Professional Standards by the end of their first placement and all of the Professional Standards by the end of their final placement.

Any concerns about a student who may not be meeting the expectations of the placement will be addressed with the student directly through a range of different methods, including, but not limited to, supervision, action planning and student progress reviews. The aim is to identify areas of learning need and identify opportunities for the student to reflect on them and create a plan to address them.

Any concerns about a student's ability to pass their placement should be flagged up with the student and Link Lecturer at the earliest opportunity. This shouldn't be left until the midpoint review or the end of placement. If there are significant concerns, the Practice Educator should meet with the student and Link Lecturer to discuss an action plan to support the student and agree any actions needed for the remainder of the placement. The Link Lecturer should chair this meeting and record this on the **Practice Learning Concerns and Action Plan Form** on the student's PebblePad portfolio. This action plan should be reviewed and a date set at the initial meeting to do this. If additional days on placement are needed, these should be discussed and agreed with the Placement Lead.

### Decision to fail a placement

Failing a student's placement is a difficult decision, reached after much evidence-gathering and reflection. Only the Practice Educator can decide to fail or pass a placement. Whilst On-Site Supervisors (where there is one), colleagues and team managers are natural sources of support in this decision-making process, the judgement and responsibility lie with the Practice Educator.

If there is a decision to fail the placement, a meeting should be held with the Practice Educator, On-Site Supervisor (if there is one), the student and Link Lecturer. The Placement Lead may also be invited. This meeting must be recorded on the **Practice Learning Concerns and Action Plan Form**. The Practice Educator must write a **Failure Report** identifying any areas of the PCF that the student has met and where they have not met it. This provides both evidence of why the placement has failed and enables the student to reflect on the reasons why the placement has ended. Students are asked to write a reflective statement on this, which will support with any future placement opportunity. Students and Practice Educators must also complete the complete and sign the attendance and supervision records in the student's portfolio.

The student will need to return any equipment belonging to the placement, including ID badges, as soon as possible. The placement should also ensure that any

mileage/expenses claims are settled, if necessary before the student's IT access is removed.

### **What happens if a student fails their placement?**

If students haven't met the required standards or demonstrated their capability against the PCF, they may get the opportunity to extend their placement to do so. The university, in agreement with the Practice Educator, may agree to extend the placement up to a maximum of 20 days. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis and is subject to conditions.

The opportunity to retake a failed placement will depend on the programme that an individual student is following; this is detailed on their Module Descriptor Form which is available on their module site on Blackboard. It may also depend on the outcome of any Fitness to Practise considerations.

The student's Link Lecturer and Personal Tutor will hold a Student Progress Review with the student upon confirmation of any failed placement.

Students may also choose to apply for [Extenuating Circumstances](#) for their placement module if they feel they have grounds to do so.

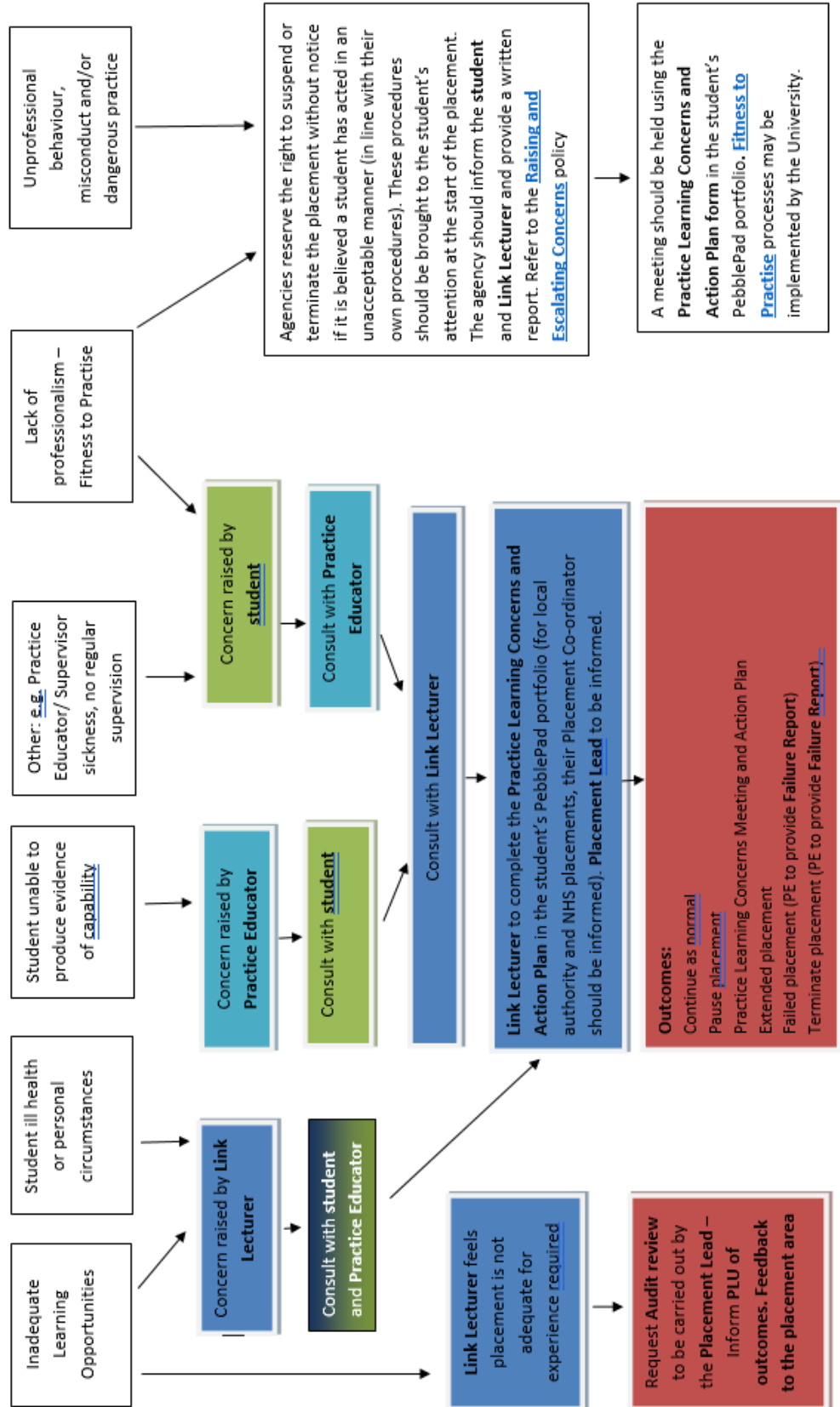
The **Flowchart – Placements Causing Concern** on page 38 should be consulted to ensure the correct route of support/action.

### **Serious concerns raised about Fitness to Practise**

If more serious concerns are raised, which question the student's ability or fitness to undertake safe practice, the case will be referred to the University's Fitness to Practise Panel. The panel will consider the issues and make a recommendation. The options are:

- That the student will be offered further opportunities to demonstrate safety in order to undertake practice learning
- That the issues are serious enough to warrant the decision that the student has failed the placement and no further opportunities will be offered. In this instance, the student may be offered the opportunity to transfer to a non-professional degree course.

## Placements Causing Concern – Flowchart of Actions



## 14. Communication

There are a number of ways in which information regarding practice placements is communicated to the student. Announcements about practice placements are posted onto the course and/or module Blackboard site. Placement notices are sent to student University email. **Students are expected to check these methods daily especially when practice placements are being organised.**

Prior to placement starting, and once placement has completed, students should address any concerns or questions to the Placement Lead.

For the duration of placement, all placement queries can be addressed to the relevant Link Lecturer in the first instance and escalated up to the Placement Lead as necessary.

Preparing for Placement lectures are timetabled across both the MA and BA Social Work programmes, and students must attend these sessions prior to starting placement. At these sessions students will be fully briefed on the placement process, responsibilities, assessment and be provided with tools to ensure a successful placement. Students are also expected to attend the mid-way Recall Day at the university, and any post-placement Review Day. These days count towards days on placement and should be planned in at the Placement Learning Agreement meeting.

Staff may also need to contact students whilst they are on placement. Students should ensure that the Placement Unit has up to date details of their address, telephone number and emergency contacts. The Placement Unit has the contact details of Practice Educators. However, should the Practice Educator, site or contact details have changed due to unforeseen circumstances, it is the student's responsibility to inform the Link Lecturer and the Placement Unit immediately and supply the new details.

Students will also have the opportunity to attend informal drop-in sessions on MS Teams with the Placement Lead throughout their placement. These sessions are voluntary and are designed to provide an additional opportunity for students to connect with the university whilst they're on placement, raise any queries or concerns and to touch base with one another.

## 15. Access to Library Support and Learning Resources

If students are going on placement for more than four weeks, they can register for library loans to be extended until the end of their placement. Follow this [link](#) for guidance on how to do this.

Students are also still able to access support from the library, including academic and study skills. [Skills@Cumbria](#) is delivered by a team of professional library and academic advisers who can offer impartial advice and guidance on a range of topics, including effective approaches to study, finding relevant sources, academic writing, referencing and working towards the dissertation.

Registered students will have access to a suite of online self-help resources 24/7 via the University's student portal. In addition, students will have access to individual advice and guidance sessions via face to face, email or skype appointments.



## 16. Placement Evaluation and Quality Assurance

The University of Cumbria has recently updated their quality assurance processes in line with the 2021 edition of BASW's *Quality assurance in practice learning (QAPL)* framework, which is in line with the standards and guidance developed by social work's regulatory body, Social Work England.

Quality assurance of the practice learning is a key component of supporting student's development towards qualified social workers. Evaluation of placements plays a critical role in this. Placement evaluation is drawn from on a number of areas, including, but not limited to: direct feedback while on or after placement from students; people with lived experience of social work; Link Lecturers; stakeholders; placement providers and Practice Educators; within staff/student Forums; during discussion within placement lectures and through module evaluations.

All feedback is used to inform placement development and placement action planning, Practice Educator and Supervisor Training, and the course validation and re-validation procedures. Evaluations also feed into the Quality Assurance for Practice Learning (QAPL) audit that is reviewed annually for all placement areas.

Students will complete their QAPL Evaluation as part of their placement portfolio. Practice Educators and/or On-Site Supervisors and Link Lecturers will also be sent separate forms which will enable them to complete an evaluation of the placement process.

## 17. Health and Safety and Student Wellbeing

### Health and Safety

During the placement, we would expect students to prove to be effective, safe and reliable individuals. Placement organisations are employers in their own right, and employers must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety and welfare of their employees. The primary responsibility for meeting statutory health and safety requirements within a placement remains with the placement organisation. Students on placement are therefore deemed to be employees and are, as such, owed a duty of care. However, it is also the responsibility of each student to conduct themselves in a professional and safe manner.

Students should be aware of all the relevant Health and Safety policies and procedures whilst they're on placement, and should be introduced to these early on in their induction period. Students are also expected to follow any governmental and agency guidance in relation to protecting themselves and others from COVID-19.

Additional health and safety information from the university for students on placement can be accessed [here](#).

### Student Wellbeing

Starting a placement can be a significant transition for any students, similar to starting a new job. As well as the practical learning and development challenges, for many students it will also be their first experience of joining a professional workplace and maybe a different cultural environment. Students are often also completing academically assessed work alongside placement, as well as any demands that arise from their caring roles, the financial impact and the pressure of day-to-day life.

We are committed to recent advice and guidance from Universities UK in [Suicide-safer universities: support for placement students](#) around how we:

- Quality assure placement in terms of their effect on mental health and wellbeing
- Develop and put in place preventative measure to support placement students
- Implement timely and effective interventions when there are concerns for a students' wellbeing or welfare.

Whilst on placement, as well as direct access to the Link Lecturer, students have ongoing access to the University's student support services, which can be accessed through the [Student Enquiry Point](#). We open up conversations early about student wellbeing on placement at the preparation for practice lectures and at the Practice Learning Agreement meeting. Students' individual needs are also considered and support agreed where necessary.

Any student who has concerns about their own or others' wellbeing whilst on placement are encouraged to contact their Practice Educator and/or Link Lecturer for support.

## 18. Whistleblowing, Safeguarding and Complaints

Placement areas provide excellent learning environments for students. However, from time to time, students may witness an incident or poor practice that is of real concern. Witnessing and reporting concerns can be distressing and difficult and we recognise that students can feel vulnerable in such situations. However, students have a responsibility to practice ethically and professionally while on placement, which includes reporting any incidents of poor practice.

Social Work England Professional Standards (2020) also details the core values of social work, some of which are to promote the rights, strengths and wellbeing of people, families and communities, act safely, respectfully and with professional integrity, promoting human rights and justice, working for the best interests of people with lived experience and conducting yourself professionally.

Please refer to University Policy on [Raising and Escalating Concerns in Relation to Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults, Children and Young People](#) for details on what to do if you have worries about vulnerable adults or children. Students should also have read the whistleblowing, complaints and safeguarding procedures of their placement areas as part of their induction period.

Raising concerns and the importance of being open when things go wrong will be covered in all pre-placement preparation lectures and students should be reassured that the university will support students who whistleblow on poor and unsafe practice. Whomever receives the concern will ensure it is passed to the correct person within the placement setting, university or other relevant external body, such as the professional regulator. The student can seek support before, during or after this process from their Link Lecturer, Personal Tutor, other member of the social work teaching team or be signposted to specialist support within the university.

### **Safeguarding Adults and Children**

If you suspect a vulnerable child or adult is at risk of harm while on placement, remember you must:

- Take immediate or prompt action
- **Seek advice and support from the Practice Educator / Line Manager straight away**
- Refer to the university's policy on [Raising and Escalating Concerns in Relation to Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults, Children and Young People](#)
- Seek advice and support from the Link Lecturer straight away
- Protect client confidentiality
- Keep an accurate record of concerns, events and dates/times as you may have to provide a factual statement

Concerns on placement must be reported immediately to your Practice Educator/Line Manager first, then your Link Lecturer secondly. The university has a Safeguarding Lead and the Link Lecturer will involve them if appropriate.

If for any reason you do not feel able to report the concern to your Practice Educator/Line Manager, or it is relating to them, please report them immediately to their senior.

If for any reason you do not feel able to report the concerns to your Link Lecturer, or it is relating to them, please report them to the Placement Lead, Programme Lead, or Principal Lecturer.

### **Complaints**

There is a University [Student Complaints Policy](#) that you may wish to follow should you have concerns about the delivery of any service provided by the university, including placements. There is support available to students from the [Student Union](#) with this process. The complaint may be referred to an appropriate manager at the placement for investigation under that organisation's own complaints procedures.

## 19. Disclosure and Barring (DBS) Checks

Students are required to commence / complete the DBS process prior to joining the programme. The clearance will normally last for the duration of the programme. It is essential that students hold an up-to-date DBS before they can be allowed to go out on any practice placement. **It is essential students keep their DBS certificates in a safe place for the duration of their programme**, as neither the University nor the DBS service can replace it. If DBS certificates are lost and the student is not signed up to the DBS Update Service, a new DBS clearance will need to be applied for prior to placements starting and the student will be liable for the cost.

Students are required to produce a copy of their DBS for placements or visits necessary within the programmes. This **must** be the DBS that is linked to their University Social Work programme, rather than any other DBS they may hold. Failure to produce this will mean that they cannot attend placement. Placement providers should not keep copies of a student's DBS as this would contravene the Data Protection Act 1998 if kept for more than six months.

On rare occasions, if a placement provider feels they are not able to offer a student a placement due to the result of their DBS check (even if they have been admitted to the course), then an alternative placement opportunity will be considered. If a new DBS check reveals new information about the student that calls into question their suitability to continue on the course, this will be referred back to the Principal Lecturer for Social Work and the University's DBS Team for further consideration.

Please note - students who intercalate or become external students will be required to apply for a new DBS check prior to their return to the University. If students are signed up to the DBS Update Service, their DBS check may be transferable. Contact the [Programme Administration Office](#) for more information.

In addition to the DBS certificate, students who are to be considered for a placement with Cumbria County Council (CCC) will be asked to complete a 'Service User Record Check' to enable CCC to ascertain if the student or a family member have, or has had, involvement with CCC. If the student or a family member is known, restrictions will be placed on what records they can access, or they may be precluded from being offered a placement in a particular Directorate. In extreme circumstances, CCC may refuse to offer a placement and where this happens, an alternative placement provider will be sourced.

Students should also be aware of the following University policies:

- [University Confidentiality Policy](#)
- [University Fitness to Practise Policy](#)
- [Raising and Escalating Concerns in Relation to Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults, Children and Young People](#)
- [Fitness to Study Policy](#)
- [Placement Learning Policy](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct](#)

## 20. Reasonable Adjustments

The programme has a positive and proactive approach to supporting disabled students on placement and is mindful of current legislation (Equality Act 2010) and professional guidance (Social Work England, 2020) relating to this issue. Given the importance of the practice-based setting within the overall education of a social worker, it is essential that disabled students have equity of access to placements as their non-disabled peers. Therefore, informing the Placement Lead or Personal Tutor of any additional needs in good time prior to placement can allow for better planning of placements and any required 'reasonable adjustment' to take place with negotiation with the placement provider.

Students are encouraged to share information with placement providers to ensure that key staff have an awareness of the impact of a disability or specific learning difficulty (SpLD). A range of reasonable adjustments are available, subject to availability and demand, and might include:

- Awareness of the impact of their disability
- Adjustments to travel time and method of travel
- Placements that meet accessibility criteria such as wheelchair user friendly, lifts etc
- On placement adjustments, such as additional non-medical help.

Please visit the [student disability and SpLD webpages](#) for further information on the support available to support students to participate effectively in their studies and placement. Where students have a Disability/SpLD Action Plan, they are expected to discuss this with their Practice Educator and Link Lecturer at the Pre-Placement Planning and Practice Learning Agreement meeting to ensure they have the adjustments and support they need whilst on placement, and that this is clearly agreed and recorded.

At the time of submitting their placement profile, students will also have the opportunity to let the Placement Unit know of any special considerations that may need to be taken into account when looking at placement allocations, such as specific health needs, caring responsibilities, cultural/religious requirements and so on.

Those students who do not wish their support needs to be known or considered are reminded that no reasonable adjustment will be made, and this may then impact on their practice learning experience.

## 21. Social Work Programme Team

Name	Role	Email
<b>Tracy Cowle</b>	Principal Lecturer	<a href="mailto:tracy.cowle@cumbria.ac.uk">tracy.cowle@cumbria.ac.uk</a>
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