



School of Education

Professional Experience Handbook

Guidelines for:
Pre-service Teachers
School Mentors
RMIT Staff



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| WELCOME TO PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AT RMIT | 3 |
| WHAT DO WE WANT PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS TO ACHIEVE FROM PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE? | 3 |
| PRE-SERVICE TEACHER CHECKLIST | 3 |
| Prior to placement | 3 |
| During placement..... | 4 |
| At the end of placement | 6 |
| PLACEMENT COORDINATOR CHECKLIST | 6 |
| MENTOR TEACHER CHECKLIST | 6 |
| ASSESSMENT OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE..... | 7 |
| DELAYED OR DEFERRED PLACEMENT | 8 |
| TERMINATION OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE | 8 |
| OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY | 9 |
| EDUCATION SETTING OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY INDUCTION | 9 |
| DISCRIMINATION, SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND BULLYING | 9 |
| INSURANCE COVER | 9 |
| PRE-SERVICE TEACHER LIABILITY | 9 |
| IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE AT RMIT | 10 |
| APPENDICES | 10 |

WELCOME TO PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AT RMIT

At RMIT University we view professional experience as an essential component of our pre-service teachers learning as they begin to integrate theoretical perspectives with practice. To all those who support our professional experience programs we extend our gratitude and appreciation. We aim to provide professional partners, especially our mentor teachers, with support to undertake their role effectively and in a mutually beneficial way. We seek to facilitate communication between all our partners to ensure shared understandings and expectations of the program. Our ongoing partnership with educational settings provide invaluable opportunities for our pre-service teachers to meet the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers at the graduate level and are fundamental to the development of the next generation of Australian teachers.

WHAT DO WE WANT PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS TO ACHIEVE FROM PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE?

Professional experience/placement is crucial to the design and delivery of teacher education programs. Commitment to professional experience is demonstrated through the excellent system built on a manifesto of extensive experiences, rigorous critique and sustained credibility. Continued improvement in professional experiences for all pre-service teachers depends on a sound conceptual framework.

In placing our pre-service teachers in professional experiences throughout their program, they will be provided with the opportunity to be mentored within quality, authentic educational settings where they can observe and experience the complexities of the teaching professions.

These experiences will enable pre-service teachers to:

- Have opportunities to develop professional relationships;
- Continue to develop content and pedagogical knowledge;
- Have ample opportunities to practice theory and theorize practice;
- Experience the implementation of the curriculum;
- Work independently and collaboratively to create appropriate experiences for learners;
- Develop effective pedagogical strategies;
- Understand and experience teaching as inquiry;
- Develop multicultural competencies;
- Use all experiences as a basis for reflection and the development of a personal philosophy.

These broad competencies should be considered in conjunction with the specific evaluative criteria for each professional experience and the Department of Education/Victorian Institute of Teaching “Standards for the teaching profession”.

PRE-SERVICE TEACHER CHECKLIST

Prior to placement

- Identify professional **goal/s** that you are to work towards achieving during the placement
- Ensure you have a current [Working With Children Check](#) – The Department of Justice requires anyone working or volunteering with children to meet a minimum checking standard

- a copy of the WWCC card is uploaded to [InPlace](#)
- pre-service teacher must provide a copy of their WWCC to the educational setting on the first day of placement and ensure they have the card on them during placement
- further information can be found on the Education Placements [website](#)
- Ensure you have completed and signed the **RMIT WIL Agreement** in accordance with RMIT Policy. This is complete once for the entirety of the program
- It is highly recommended students complete the **WIL Ready [module](#)**. This course covers the basics of what you need to know before you start your WIL activity.
- Advise the WIL team and update on Enrolment Online any changes to your contact information, residential address and enrolment information
- Advise the WIL team of any school you are employed under **Permission to Teach (PTT)** at
- Advise the WIL team of any potential **conflict of interest**. Failing to declare a conflict of interest may result in the termination of the placement. You can not undertake placement at an education setting where:
 - Spouse/partner/family members/close friends employed at
 - Children, siblings or children of family members attend
 - Currently or recently employed (teacher aid, OSHC worker)
 - Where you have attended as a student in the previous 10 years
- Accommodate your placement with other work and family commitments
- Pre-service teacher must be prepared to travel up to 90 minutes one way to reach the assigned placement setting, this could be more if you rely on public transport
- Contact the education setting to confirm placement and daily start/finish times. You may also be required to attend the educational setting for induction training or to meet your mentor

During placement

- **Confidential Emergency Contact form:** on the first day of placement complete the form and give to the educational setting placement coordinator. This form provides vital information to the educational setting and emergency response staff in the event of an emergency during placement.
- **Placement documentation:** at the commencement of placement ensure your mentor teacher has received the placement documentation.
- **Attendance** is crucial to the successful completion of the program and teacher registration.
 - Attend placement at the scheduled dates and at the times directed by the educational setting
 - Attend the whole day even if there are no teaching duties
 - If unable to attend placement due to an emergency or illness, you **must** telephone the educational setting before the day commences and notify the WIL team via email: education.placements@rmit.edu.au
 - Absences must be made up before the end of semester at a time negotiated with mentor teacher. Make up days cannot be scheduled where they conflict with RMIT University classes
 - Medical certificate must be provided to the educational setting and WIL team for absences of 3 days or more
 - In the event of industrial action by educational setting staff including the mentor, the pre-service teacher should withdraw from the setting for the duration of the action and notify the WIL team

- Advised not to book Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) during placement
- **Professional conduct:** preservice teachers are guests in education settings and their behaviour may affect opportunities for future pre-service teachers.
 - Expected to be punctual, maintain professional communication (oral, written & electronic) with mentor and peers
 - Work collaboratively
 - Courteous staff room and car park usage and care with equipment and resources
 - Inappropriate remarks (verbal & written) regarding children, staff and educational setting must be avoided under all circumstances
 - Strictly avoid giving personal details to children
 - Physical contact with the intention to punish, discipline or restrain children, or contact which could be misinterpreted as of a sexual nature should be strictly avoided
 - Mobile phone must be turned off during planning, teaching and evaluative sessions and all school meetings
 - Dress appropriately and present in a professional manner
 - Be aware of and comply with Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) [Codes of Conduct and Ethics](#)
- **Social Media:** professional behaviour is extended to the use of social media.
 - Consider conduct in public forums outside the education setting such as Instagram, Facebook, TickTok, Snapchat, YouTube and Twitter which are easily accessed by students
 - Ensure you are not represented inappropriately on social media
 - Under no circumstances comment on social media about an educational setting, staff, children or families
- **Policy & Practices:** ensure you are familiar with educational settings policies and practices in particular for managing children's behaviour and health and safety issues, including playground accidents.
- **Reflective Practice:** students have a responsibility to discuss teaching performance with mentor and seek feedback.
 - At mid point of placement discuss with mentor initial progress and complete the Interim Review Form
 - If unclear about feedback, clarify with mentor in a professional and courteous manner.
 - If there are issues or concerns, you must make all reasonable attempts to find solutions to problems.
- **Placement Difficulties:** if you are experiencing difficulties of any nature during placement, contact the placement coordinator and the WIL team as soon as possible
 - Complete an Expression of Concern form and send to the WIL team so further action can be taken
 - Reach out to RMIT Health, Safety & Wellbeing [team](#) for a confidential discussion to identify support services available
 - If a preservice teacher fails to attend their scheduled placement or withdraws from placement without approval from the Course Coordinator, Associate Dean Disciplines (Partnerships) or Program Director, the placement will be deemed a

termination and will be recorded as a fail, unless there are extenuating circumstances

- **Student Confidentiality and Authorisation** must be maintained at all times.
 - References to specific children and education settings should be deleted when reproducing work samples and case studies
 - Collection of children's work for sample illustration must be authorized by the supervising teacher and where possible, the parent
 - Children may only be photographed, audio or videoed with prior parental/legal guardian permission; any video or images of children are the property of the education setting and are not to be removed from the premises.
- Discuss professional goal with mentor teacher and ask for specific written and verbal feedback on goal.

At the end of placement

- Arrange a time to discuss your Professional Experience Report with your mentor
- Ensure your report is fully completed, including signature from mentor and pre-service teacher and upload to Canvas and InPlace
- Collect your Confidential Emergency Contact form
- Return any educational books or resources borrowed. Any costs related to loss or damage of school property use is the pre-service teacher's responsibility
- Review/refine goal and set new goals in preparation for next placement

PLACEMENT COORDINATOR CHECKLIST (person responsible for the management of pre-service teachers in the education setting)

- Collect the Confidential Emergency form from pre-service teacher
- Forward the placement information and documentation to the mentor teacher
- Explain expectations to pre-service teacher: start/finish times, break times, dress code, mobile phone policy, car parking and meeting attendance
- Inform pre-service teacher OH&S regulations, especially emergency procedures
- Familiarise the pre-service teacher with the organisation of the education setting, including daily organisation, management structure, meeting and other schedules
- Submit a tax invoice to RMIT (apinvoices@rmit.edu.au) to claim for payment. This cannot be completed until you have received an RMIT Purchase Order (PO). The WIL team will issue the PO during the placement

MENTOR TEACHER CHECKLIST (the main source of professional support and guidance for the pre-service teacher)

- Is a consistent, positive teacher role model, with sound knowledge of curriculum and effective teaching practice
- Communicates effectively about the service requirements and the pre-service teachers responsibilities
- Provides quality regular feedback (written and verbal) in a professional manner to the pre-service teacher on their progress and offers support when needed
- Facilitates open and honest communication in which the pre-service teacher feels they can trust and be trusted
- Challenges pre-service teacher to critically analyse their practice and encourages them to seek solutions to the problems and challenges of situations/issues as they arise

- Encourages discussions about teaching pedagogy and associated theories and philosophies
- Pre-service teacher concerns:
 - Contact Course Coordinator if there are concerns regarding pre-service teacher progress
 - Complete an Expression of Concern form and send to the WIL team
 - If concerns persist or progress unsatisfactory, contact the WIL team who will arrange for a RMIT staff member to visit to support you and the pre-service teacher
 - If the pre-service teacher is at risk of failing the placement, a period of time should be agreed upon in which the pre-service teacher has an opportunity to improve their performance
- Assesses the pre-service teacher at the mid point of placement and completes the Interim Review Form
- Assess the pre-service teacher and complete the Professional Experience Report.
 - Mentor teachers should apply professional judgements using evidence of the pre-service teachers demonstrated knowledge, practice, and engagement in relation to the expected APST descriptors for the stage
 - Consideration should be given for the placement context and opportunities to encounter relevant experiences enabling the pre-service teacher to demonstrate the APST.
 - The report must be discussed with the pre-service teacher and signed by both parties.
 - The pre-service teacher must receive a copy of the report at the end of placement

ASSESSMENT OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

To complete the program, pre-service teachers must successfully complete the professional experience components of each course and in addition pass the coursework assessments associated with that course. The overall responsibility for the assessment of professional experience remains with the university, however it is the mentor teachers' summative feedback that attests that the pre-service teacher is meeting the expectations of the VIT Code of Conduct and the Graduate Teacher Standards.

Concerns may arise at any time during the placement. The mentor teacher and placement coordinator should discuss and document concerns with pre-service teacher so they can make every effort to take advice on board, address areas of concern and improve performance. If performance does not improve, the mentor teacher is to complete either the Interim Review Form or Expression of Concern form and send to the WIL Team. The Course Coordinator will then work with the mentor teacher regarding the pre-service teacher's performance.

The School of Education reserves the right to make the final decision on whether a student has successfully passed a placement.

When a pre-service teacher receives an unsatisfactory result for their placement, they will fail the course and be identified as 'At Risk' in accordance with the Assessment and Assessment Flexibility policy.

DELAYED OR DEFERRED PLACEMENT

Failure to complete the number of days or minimum teaching time within the semester of enrolment will result in a fail grade. Pre-service teachers who cannot complete the specified requirements of a course by the due date due to extenuating circumstances (e.g. illness or injury) must either submit an Application for Extension of Time form or apply for Special Consideration ([link](#))

On occasion, pre-service teachers face serious difficulties that mean that they, or teaching staff, consider they are unable or unprepared to undertake their placement at the usual time. Examples of situations are:

- Where a pre-service teacher has a mental or physical illness, which severely limits their capacities for a time-limited period
- Where a pre-service teacher has been selected for the program and subsequently found to need further support in communication/language skills
- Where pre-service teachers have not completed the required academic work (or briefing sessions) prior to the beginning of placement

If pre-service teachers consider they are in such a situation, they should in the first instance consider enrolling in the relevant course in a different semester and in the case of mental or physical illness, approach the [Equitable Learning Services](#) for advice.

TERMINATION OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

When on professional experience we expect all pre-service teachers to act professionally. A placement may be terminated at the discretion of the education setting where that conduct contravenes [RMIT Student Conduct Policy](#). For example:

- Behave in a manner that is indecent or offensive to the extent that it is likely to make any others feel unsafe in the RMIT learning and working environment
- Harass, intimidates or bullies any person (or attempts to)
- Willfully, recklessly or negligently engages in a course of action that causes or may cause physical or psychological harm or arouses apprehension or fear, either directly or indirectly, physically, verbally, electronically or by any other means
- Engage in any other conduct, whether within or outside RMIT premises, that may be prejudicial to the good order and discipline of RMIT or is likely to bring RMIT into disrepute.

General misconduct will be forwarded to a senior office in the School of Education. General misconduct and academic misconduct may result in expulsion or suspension of the program.

If the placement is terminated at an early stage, the Associate Dean Discipline (Partnerships) in conjunction with the Course Coordinator and the WIL team, will carefully review the situation and the learning needs of the pre-service teacher and make recommendations about:

- Opportunity to repeat the placement
- Special requirements in relation to placement
- Requirements in relation to course enrolment policy
- Nature of the learning environment and appropriate work

If a pre-service teacher makes a unilateral decision to terminate their placement without consulting the Course Coordinator, Associate Dean Discipline (Partnerships), Program Director or the WIL team, they will fail the professional experience course in which they are enrolled in. They will be identified as 'At Risk' as per the Assessment and Assessment Flexibility policy.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Pre-service teachers are advised to take protective measures regarding their own health while on placement. Ensure immunisations are up to date, you are physically healthy and take care with personal hygiene while on placement.

EDUCATION SETTING OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY INDUCTION

Pre-service teachers should ensure that they are aware of:

- Occupational health and safety procedures in the education setting and on relevant excursions and camps
- Accident, first aid, emergency procedures and responsible staff
- Allergies and anaphylactic policies
- Staff and children duty of care, welfare and discipline policies
- Privacy legislation requirements
- Professional expectations of student teachers
- Policies regarding daily arrival and departure, leaving the school during the work hours and authorised access outside normal working hours.

Please notify the WIL team if an accident or incident occurs during a placement.

DISCRIMINATION, SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

Discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying are unlawful in all work and education environments. If a pre-service teacher feels they have been discriminated against, sexually harassed or bullied by someone employed by or a client or student of the education setting during their placement, please contact the Associate Dean Disciplines (Partnerships) or RMIT Safer Community ([link](#)). Similarly, if a staff member or child at a placement claims that they have been discriminated against, sexually harassed or bullied by a pre-service teacher, RMIT University can provide assistance.

INSURANCE COVER

Students on approved placements are covered by a variety of University insurance [policies](#).

Pre-service teachers are not eligible for Workcover as they are not employees of the education setting.

PRE-SERVICE TEACHER LIABILITY

Pre-service teachers must not be left in charge of children or classes and must not take over the roles of mentor teachers who are absent. This includes non-teaching activities such as excursions. The legal responsibility for a class or group of children being taught by a pre-service teacher rests with the mentor teacher. Similarly, pre-service teachers should not represent themselves as fully qualified teachers under any circumstances.

IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE AT RMIT

- Student [Connect](#) – 9925 5000
- Urgent mental health support: Phone 1300 305 737 / Text 0488 884 162
- Safer Community: 9925 2396 e: safercommunity@rmit.edu.au

APPENDICES

- Emergency Contact Form
- Interim Review Form
- Pre-service Teacher Expression of Concern Form
- RMIT Staff Observation Form
- Placement Termination Form
- Mentor Teacher Expression of Concern Form
- Tax Invoice