GUSS/Social Work and Human Services/Field Education

Overview: Partnership Reference Group

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In 2015, at the instigation of the RMIT Social Work group of partners, the RMIT Partnership Reference Group was convened. The group remains keen to monitor and input on processes to improve placement provision, grow their organisation’s involvement with the university and improve reciprocity between the partners and RMIT.

Joint funding applications between the partners and RMIT Social Work were successfully developed for events and projects through internal RMIT funding aimed at promoting industry–engaged networks. These grants allowed for the development of training/ professional development opportunities, assistance with research capacity building and access to university resources to create a sustainable community of practice and demonstrate a commitment to partnerships ensuring the longevity of a model for placement provision. The first of these events resulted from the reference group interest in building organisational research capacity.

The Social Justice Research Forum was a day event hosted in 2016 to build collaborative research capacity for our partners using the expertise of RMIT academics. There was a diversity of research capacity across partners, therefore a consultation process was designed to respond to this difference in planning and facilitating the day. The outcomes of the day included access to knowledge about building research capacity in community organisations. More specific results included the planning of joint research grant applications at different levels of the university, the development of a consortia of partners to work on a collaborative project, steps to develop adjunct academic positions and future training plans.

In 2017 a Co-design Masterclass was facilitated for partners with the purpose of demonstrating the use of co-design strategies/tools through using an organisational challenge faced by one peak organisation partner. It was through this real-life application that the partner’s Board of management was able to progress a problem faced by them.

Another initiative in 2018 was the building an external facing online RMIT social work portal. This occurred in response to partner’s request for greater access to university resources. The aim is to provide more immediate access to these resources for our partners but also for field educators generally. This combines with the monthly professional development series aimed at all field educators taking RMIT students on placements as well as targeted partner training or access to RMIT facilities for partner events.

Also in 2018 was the RMIT Partnership Reference Group book project where twelve of our partners worked together on producing with us: Partnerships with the community: Forty-five years of social work field education at RMIT. A book which gathers together the stories of our partners and the types of placements they have provided for RMIT Social Work students. The book documents the history of field education at RMIT and the development of the partnership model to address placement provision as well as building community capacity in partnership with RMIT.

The reciprocity evident in the partnerships is demonstrated in the diversity and innovation of the placements as well as the professional development opportunities, joint writing projects, research partnerships, industry scholarships and fellows, participation in teaching and curriculum design and advocacy projects.

Visit our [Social Work Field Education Hub](https://sites.rmit.edu.au/swhs-wil/) for more information, you may also download a copy of the book [Partnership with the Community](https://sites.rmit.edu.au/swhs-wil/partners/) from this site.