Australian National Field Education Network Distinctive Pedagogy

Statement

September, 2016

Field Education as the Distinctive Pedagogy of Social Work Education

Social work education prepares students for professional practice through learning core and common knowledge, skills and values that can be applied across diverse practice settings. Field education is a distinctive pedagogy for social work. It provides students the opportunity to integrate classroom learning with practice. Both the classroom and field components play an integral part in developing students’ ways of thinking, doing and being. Field education socialises students into the profession through immersion in a real practice context where students have the opportunity to make sense of what it means to be a social worker and to develop their professional identity, integrity and ethical practice. In field education, students are required to sustain a high level of engagement over a significant period of time in collaboration and partnership with industry. In having to practice and perform, students experience more profoundly the complex, ambiguous and indeterminate nature of practice. As students take responsibility for their learning, this experience significantly shifts and transforms the student’s praxis. With supervision, students develop their ability to engage in critical reflection, to explore different ways of understanding and responding to diverse and often unique practice situations and to learn to practice creatively. These attributes are further informed by social work core values of social justice, human rights, human dignity and equity.

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