Work Integrated Learning (WIL)

Practitioner Observation Student Handbook

Industry handbook for:
PCS207 Pre-Clinical Studies1

Bachelor of Health Science (Clinical Nutrition)
Bachelor of Health Science (Naturopathy)
Bachelor of Health Science (Western Herbal Medicine)
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Well done – you have now come to the stage in your academic journey where you will take part in a work integrated learning (WIL) placement in a clinical practice to gain real-life experience and receive mentoring in your chosen area of natural medicine.

This handbook provides the information you will need to prepare for your placement, how to search for prospective supervising host practitioners, as well as your responsibilities and the expectations of Torrens University and your supervising practitioner while you are on placement.

If you have any queries after reading this handbook, do not hesitate to contact your Torrens University Success Coach or Learning Facilitator for assistance. We hope your practitioner observation placement will be a rewarding and inspiring learning experience for you.

The placement process

A. Prepare for your practitioner observation placement
   - Read this handbook.
   - Check the assessment requirements on the PCS207 Subject Outline. Read the assessment briefs.
   - Upload a copy of your First Aid Certificate HLTAID003 to Blackboard.
   - Upload a copy of current Working With Children Check number/Blue card to Blackboard.

B. Secure your placement or placements
   - Search for a prospective practitioner at a clinic and secure a placement.
   - You may find additional resources on Careers Connect to assist with this process.
   - You may organise more than one placement.
   - Choose a practitioner who is suitably qualified and accredited.

C. Complete your Work Integrated Learning Agreement
   - It is your responsibility to ensure that you have an approved Work Integrated Learning Agreement prior to the commencement of your work experience. This agreement is available in your course materials. It must first be signed by you, the student, as well as the industry host. It must then be emailed to wil@laureate.edu.au to be authorised and signed by a Torrens University Representative. You will be advised once it is approved and it will be uploaded into Careers Connect.
   - Upload copy of approved WIL agreement to Blackboard.

D. Participate in your practitioner observation placement
   - Observe clinical practice in an external setting.
   - Reflect on clinical practice observed.
   - Complete assigned assessment tasks.
   - Upload copy of attendance record as evidence of completion of placement hours.
Practitioner observation placement flowchart

1. Secure external observational placement
2. Participate in observational placement
3. Prepare for external observational placement
4. Sign and submit placement agreement form prior to observation
Purpose of the placement

The practitioner observation placement will introduce you to clinical practice within your specialised modality – Clinical Nutrition, Naturopathy or Western Herbal Medicine.

You will be given the opportunity to:

- Familiarise yourself with the day-to-day operations of a complementary medicine practice (aligned with your modality)
- Observe health care professionals and patients in consultation in order to gain a better understanding of communication and counselling techniques, and case-taking procedures
- Develop an appreciation of the role of practitioners in their chosen modality, including the scope and limitations of practice, and working with diverse populations
- Become familiar with tasks involved in clinical management including consultation, treatment modalities, dispensary protocols, practice management, reception and other administrative duties.

Practitioner observation placements provide students with the opportunity to see how complementary medicine practitioners incorporate communication, counselling and case-taking techniques in a real-world environment. It enables students to begin to integrate their theoretical learning with the practical realities of health consultation management and is invaluable in shaping the quality and passion of our future professionals within the natural health care industry.

Placement requirements

Number of hours

The placement consists of a minimum of 25 hours of clinical observation over the trimester. The total required hours can be achieved with more than one practitioner. During this time, you are required to observe no less than 15 consultations. Please refer to the subject outline and / or assessment area relevant to your subject/s.

Type of placement

You will be required to observe professional clinical practice only. You are not permitted to provide any information, advice or care to a client during these observations.

Assessment

Placement participation is compulsory. A student’s ability to pass the subject is dependent upon the successful completion of all industry requirements. Assessment is graded as either a pass or fail. Students will complete a two-part Observation Report that is aligned to their practitioner observation placement.

Important forms and documents

You will require the following:

i. WIL placement agreement with the Certificate of Currency (Insurance)
ii. current Working With Children Check card/ Blue Card
iii. current First Aid Certificate for HLTAID003
iv. placement attendance log sheet
v. letter of introduction (email template)
vi. Resume (if requested by the prospective practitioner).

Some of these forms and documents are available from the learning portal and / or will be issued to you. Please contact your Learning Facilitator if you require further assistance.
Prerequisites

Students are required to have completed all academic prerequisite subjects prior to commencing their practitioner observation placement. Please refer to the subject outline regarding prerequisite requirements relevant to your specific degree program.

- Current First Aid Certificate HLTAID003 Provide First Aid (including cardiopulmonary resuscitation).
- Current Working With Children Check card or Blue Card (Volunteer).
- The Working With Children Act 2005 requires that people who work or offer a free volunteer service in certain child-related work apply for and pass a Working With Children Check (WWCC or Blue Card). It aims to strike a balance between protecting children aged less than 18 years of age, promoting volunteering and safeguarding the rights of individuals.
- Please note free volunteer versions may be acceptable.
- Police Check (some workplaces only). This is an additional requirement in some workplaces, primarily those that are government funded. Check with your supervising practitioner prior to commencing your placement.

Finding a suitable placement

You are responsible for searching and securing a suitable clinic placement with a qualified practitioner, and we recommend starting your search well before you begin this subject. Ideally, the placement should be relevant to your future career goals and specialisation. You cannot start your placement before beginning PCS207.

Field of practitioners

Naturopathic and Western Herbal Medicine students are required to conduct their observations predominantly with either a naturopath and/or herbalist. Clinical Nutrition students are required to conduct their observations predominantly with either a nutritional medicine practitioner, nutritional therapy practitioner, naturopath or dietician.

All students can use up to five of their observation hours outside their field with other complementary medicine practitioners, including integrative medicine doctors, dieticians (naturopathy students), chiropractors, osteopaths, public health clinics and Chinese medicine practitioners.

Supervising host practitioner requirements

A suitable supervising practitioner must be appropriately qualified with formal qualifications in your specialised modality.

- The prospective supervising practitioner must work in a professional natural health clinical setting or home clinic and have a minimum of three years’ full time practice experience (or the equivalent part time).
- They must be an accredited member of a reputable professional organisation aligned to their educational qualification and field of practice.

Suggested search websites:

- Australian Natural Therapists Association ANTA https://www.australiannaturaltherapistsassociation.com.au
- Australian Register of Naturopaths and Herbalists ARONAH http://www.aronah.org/register-of-practitioners/
- Complementary Medicine Association CMA https://cma.asn.au/find-a-practitioner/
- Dieticians Association of Australia DAA https://daa.asn.au/find-an-apd/
- Natural Therapy Pages https://www.naturaltherapypages.com.au

- Or a health care related field in public health nutrition or health promotion
- There must be a high level of support and assistance available to the student in the workplace.
- The student and the prospective supervising host practitioner must negotiate a suitable work program. Please discuss the appropriate activities with your prospective supervising practitioner to align with the objectives and learning outcomes for PCS207 Pre-Clinical Studies 1.
• Informed consent from patients must be obtained before observing their health consultations.

• Arrangements for the placement must be confirmed in writing on the WIL agreement form with details of the student, the prospective workplace and Torrens University prior to the commencement of the placement.

Remember to update your resume in case they ask for it. Your Success Coach will support you to ensure your resume is of a professional standard. Consider creating a LinkedIn profile. Follow this link for more information on how to create a resume from LinkedIn: [http://theundercoverrecruiter.com/how-convert-your-linkedin-profile-fine-looking-resume/](http://theundercoverrecruiter.com/how-convert-your-linkedin-profile-fine-looking-resume/)

Keep a record of all your attempts to secure a placement.

**Suggested letter of introduction**

You will find an example of a letter of introduction (email template) for approaching practitioners in your subject Blackboard page. You can use this template to assist you when you are contacting clinics for a placement.

Always remember to follow-up email correspondence with a phone call as this adds a personal touch and may lead to a more successful outcome.

Contact your Success Coach if you require further advice or assistance with your correspondence.

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**Searching for a clinic**

The first step is to make a short list of complementary medicine clinics/practitioners within your local area. Then write yourself a brief introduction outlining your needs, so you can be clear and succinct in your phone call or email to a prospective supervising host practitioner. You can use the suggested letter of introduction (email template) to assist you when approaching practitioners. Check that your selected practitioners are not on the “Do Not Contact” list on Blackboard. Please note, current clinic supervisors are not eligible due to potential conflict of interest.

Finding a placement may require some persistence and a little thinking ‘outside the square’. Consider clinics in different areas of the city or in rural areas rather than focusing on clinics in your immediate neighbourhood if you are experiencing challenges securing a placement. This could provide you with more opportunities. You may need to complete your hours with more than one supervising practitioner.

Just like applying for a job, you should show your prospective host practitioner that you are interested and demonstrate initiative to find out as much as you can about their clinic. Make sure to do some research.
Placement agreement (insurance and indemnity)

Torrens University arranges insurance cover for students undertaking a WIL placement. This insurance cover includes personal injury, public liability and professional indemnity.

To be eligible for coverage under this policy, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that a completed WIL placement agreement with the Certificate of Currency (Insurance) is lodged with their Success Coach prior to the commencement of the practitioner observation placement. Copies of this WIL placement agreement with the Certificate of Currency (Insurance) will be forwarded to the external practitioner and the student, with the original kept on file at the university. Before placement can commence for any student, the WIL placement agreement must be authorised (signed off by Torrens University) and returned to the student. It will be also be sent to the external practitioner. Please note: The WIL placement agreement must be approved by Torrens University before Day 1 of the placement.

Failure to lodge the appropriate WIL documentation before commencing the placement will render the student ineligible for insurance cover.

Students engaged in clinical practice do not receive any remuneration and therefore have no claim on the employer’s Worker’s Compensation Insurance of their placement workplace.

Immunisation requirements

Some individual workplaces, such as public health facilities that involve direct client contact, may require you to provide evidence of your vaccination status or require you to be vaccinated against chicken pox, hepatitis B, influenza, tuberculosis, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, measles mumps and rubella prior to commencing your placement. Please check the immunisation requirements of individual clinics prior to commencing placements.

Ethics and professional behaviour

You should refer to your respective discipline standards for ethical behaviour. Useful website links include:

- ANTA Scope and Standards of Practice
- ARONAH Code of Conduct
  http://www.aronah.org/aronah-documents/
- ATMS Code of Conduct
- CMA State Codes of Conduct
  https://cma.asn.au/members-area/state-codes-conduct/
- DAA Professional Standards
  https://daa.asn.au/maintaining-professional-standards/
- NHAA Code of Ethics & Constitution
- NSA Code of Ethics

You are expected to comply with all the standards and practices of the industry host’s workplace. These should be discussed with your Success Coach prior to the commencement of your placement.

You should remember that you are a representative of Torrens University, and as such, should behave in a professional manner at all times.

Additionally, you are expected to:

- Work with colleagues and clients irrespective of gender, age, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation.
- Maintain a high standard of hygiene and promote safe practices in the workplace.
- Respect the rights and dignity of all clients.
- Maintain professional and ethical conduct (see above).
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries with patients and other practitioners.
• Be punctual (see below).
• Maintain client and clinic privacy and confidentiality (see below).
• Take personal responsibility for seeking out learning opportunities.

You must not:
• attend your clinic placement under the influence of alcohol or any drug that has a negative effect on behaviour
• engage in any behaviour that could be considered bullying, threatening, abusive or intimidating
• attend your clinical placement if you are unwell
• give any advice or any form of treatment within the clinical setting
• leave the clinical placement without first advising your supervising host practitioner.

Professional misconduct
There are many types of professional misconduct. Examples include when you:
• make breaches of professional and personal boundaries
• break confidentiality/privacy of clients or colleagues.

In cases of serious professional misconduct, your Success Coach and/or Program Director will be required to meet with you. Depending on the outcome, you may be withdrawn from practitioner observation placement. Where you are not permitted to return to clinical observations, a Fail grade may be recorded for that subject. You have the right to appeal through normal Torrens University procedures.

Please refer to the Industry Host's workplace policies and procedures.

**Punctuality**

You are expected to be punctual at all times. Generally, you will observe the usual working hours of the workplace.

If you are more than 15 minutes late without a prior arrangement or with no valid reason, you will not be credited with the clinical hours for that day and will need to make these up on another day.

**What to do if you cannot attend**

If you are unable to attend your placement due to illness, carer responsibilities or other personal emergencies, you must contact your supervising practitioner to advise them of your absence as soon as you can, and no later than your expected starting time. Any placement hours missed must be made up at a later date.

In the event that you require an extended absence or are unable to complete your placement, it is your responsibility to advise your supervising practitioner and your Torrens University Success Coach as soon as possible. You will be required to renegotiate a later placement at the current workplace or an alternative placement to ensure you complete the necessary hours and number of consultations.

**Dress code**

The dress standards of the workplace should be observed, and all clothing and shoes clean and in good repair. You should consult with workplaces in regards to specific safety requirements associated with dress code.
Additionally:

- hair should be well groomed
- fingernails should be short and clean
- closed toe shoes to be worn
- any personal jewellery should be kept to a minimum (preferable that none be worn) so as not to interfere with treatments and to meet infection control guidelines. For WHS and client comfort, do not wear any dangly earrings, bracelets, bangles, necklaces, etc.

Personal hygiene must be maintained in the work setting. You are expected to have bathed and used deodorants or antiperspirants as needed prior to attending your work experience. Breath fresheners should be used as required. Chewing gum during your placement hours is not acceptable.

Failure to comply with any aspect of dress, grooming or hygiene standards may see you sent home. You will need to make up any hours missed.

Rights of consumers

You and your supervising host practitioner are expected to uphold the rights of clients.

- Clients have the right to expect a safe and adequate level of care delivered by competent staff.
- Before you can observe any patient, they must be asked to give explicit consent.
- Clients are under no obligation to participate in teaching activities and have the right to refuse the presence of an observational student.

Confidentiality and privacy

You must maintain the confidentiality of all clients. This means you must not disclose, collect or use any information of a personal or sensitive nature or any personal health information without the express consent of the client.

Client notes or other materials containing confidential patient information, such as treatment planning, must not leave the clinic site. You are not permitted, under any circumstances, to copy or take client notes home

Unless you have the permission of your supervising host practitioner, do not read, collect, discuss or disclosed (including in general conversation) information about patients. Additionally, do not discuss clients outside of the clinical practice. Any class discussions or assessment items should not include any identifying information.

The privacy of individuals and personal information is protected by government legislation and breaches of privacy carry legal penalties. You should read and apply all sections of the privacy legislation relevant to your State.


You must also respect and not divulge any information about the clinic operations, financial information or anything else which can be considered “commercial in confidence” obtained by you in the course of your placement.

There may be instances where students are required to sign a confidentiality agreement, declaring not to access, use, disclose or retain personal patient information. Students found in breach of this will be withdrawn from the placement immediately and may subsequently be excluded from the program following consideration of the matter by the university Program Director.

As part of your learning, you will be required to analyse your clinical observations. Do not include any information that could identify a client in any class discussions or assessment items. In order to support learning whilst protecting client confidentiality, follow these guidelines:

- Use pseudonyms for the names of patients and organisations in all academic works.
- Identifying information, including demographic information, should be modified in academic work, using terminology such as similar to'.
- Use the password protect function on your Word software programs to further guard sensitive information.
- Avoid naming other students in academic work, such as reflective pieces or portfolios.

Reporting incidents and accidents

As part of our responsibility, and for your safety, Torrens has developed guidelines for reporting incidents and any unforeseen events that occur during work experience.

An incident is defined as an adverse event where there is some injury or potential injury to the student.
The incident should be reported as soon as possible to the staff at the industry host workplace.

The need for a medical assessment is determined according to the Workplace Health and Safety Policy of the workplace and Torrens University. Following initial resolution which may include medical assessment, an agency and the Torrens University / accident report should be completed.

Official reporting on behalf of the workplace is the responsibility of the industry host and not the student. It is, however, your responsibility to participate in this activity.

What to do if something goes wrong

If you have any concerns or problems at your practitioner observation placement, you should discuss these in the first instance with your Success Coach or Learning Facilitator.
Documents required

Before you commence your Practitioner Observation Placement, obtain and read:

- Work Integrated Learning Policy
- Student Conduct Policy
- Subject Outline PCS207

Before your first day attending the industry host workplace, you and authorized representatives of your industry host and of Torrens University must read and sign

- Placement Agreement (WIL)

Before you commence your placement, you must submit

- Current First Aid Certificate HLTAID003
- Working With Children Check or Blue Card

Each day you attend the industry host workplace, your supervising practitioner must sign

- Placement attendance log sheet