

Tips for Field Instructors to Foster an Inclusive and Accessible Learning Experience for Field Placement Students

Introduction

This document provides helpful tips and resources to assist preceptors, field instructors, and placement site supervisors to create an accessible learning environment for all students. Please note that language used to describe student placements or site supervisors may change from program to program and site to site, but the tips below are designed for all work-integrated and experiential learning opportunities.

Preparation for the Placement

Prepare for the arrival and early days of the student. Some important things to consider:

- Get any required paperwork ready
- Plan for a physical orientation to the workplace
- Facilitate introductions to the work team
- Inform the student of office norms (use of shared resources for example)
- Plan for the student's work-space, if applicable
- Inform the student of the work schedule such as arrival time, lunch/breaks, and outline daily expectations
- Be open to needs the student may express around spirituality and religious observance (e.g. time/space to pray, smudge, etc.; days off for religious holidays), gender identity and expression (name, pronouns, etc.), holistic health and wellness (break times, specific diet, allergies, etc.), and clarify with the student how these can be best supported so the student can be successful in the placement.

Pace & Processing Time

- Students on placement will need more time than experienced professionals to process practical learning experiences. This may require students to take breaks throughout the day. A lunch break should always be offered.
- Students may need to operate at a slower pace than the professionals around them, especially early on in the placement
- Students may need to take notes during supervision and staff meetings, to refer back to later
- Providing students with as much notice as possible regarding expected tasks and outcomes (e.g. oral presentations) will allow them to prepare appropriately and feel more confident in completing the task

Check-ins

- Make check-ins part of the ongoing communication process between student and field instructor preceptor to monitor how the learning process is going for the student. Discuss the frequency of check-ins with the student, ie. daily, weekly etc., and supervision styles.
- Demonstrate openness to different styles of learning if a student communicates this to you. This may mean offering or accepting tasks and assignments in different formats.

Feedback and Evaluations

- As respected professionals in the field, feedback from field instructors is highly valued by students and can even be life-changing for them as new professionals
- Field instructor feedback can foster confidence in a student as they grow to become professionals
- Taking a strength-based perspective when offering feedback to students can help to remind both students and field instructors that this is a learning experience with further opportunities to grow and work on areas of improvement
- Ideally, feedback is provided to students on an ongoing basis, so that when the time comes for the student to be evaluated formally, the substance of the evaluation will be expected and not come as a surprise to them
- Before providing feedback, it's helpful to ask students what format they would prefer. Oral, written or a combination of both. It may not always be possible to provide feedback in the student's preferred format, but understanding how they best process the information you provide will create a more successful placement experience.

Placement Accommodations

The more the above tips can be incorporated into student learning, the more accessible the opportunity will be for all participants. While there will always be a need to accommodate individual students, more accessibility up front reduces the need for individual accommodations. Some students may require specific accessibility-related accommodations in placement in order to ensure their full participation and success. In these cases, someone from the University (for example, a faculty advisor or staff member) will connect with you or your organization's contact person to discuss the details.

Self-Reflection for Field Instructors

- Think of a positive placement experience you had when you were a student. How did it alter your understanding of the profession?
- How did your field instructor instill confidence in you?
- Did a field instructor ever make you feel you had chosen the right career? How did they do this?
- Was there a way that a field instructor communicated with you that helped you to learn?
- Did a field instructor affect the way you work in your practice today?

Want to learn more?

Check out these links for more resources around developing an inclusive and accessible learning experience:

[Accessibility at Ryerson](#)

[Access Ryerson](#)

[Universal Design For Learning - Ryerson Report](#)

[Council of Ontario Universities](#)

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