

Learning in Falkirk

Guidance for Student Placements for Social Workers and Occupational Therapists



How it Works

The image to the left is a general roadmap of student placements.

Students **cannot** source their own placements. Falkirk works in partnership with different Universities to match appropriate placements.

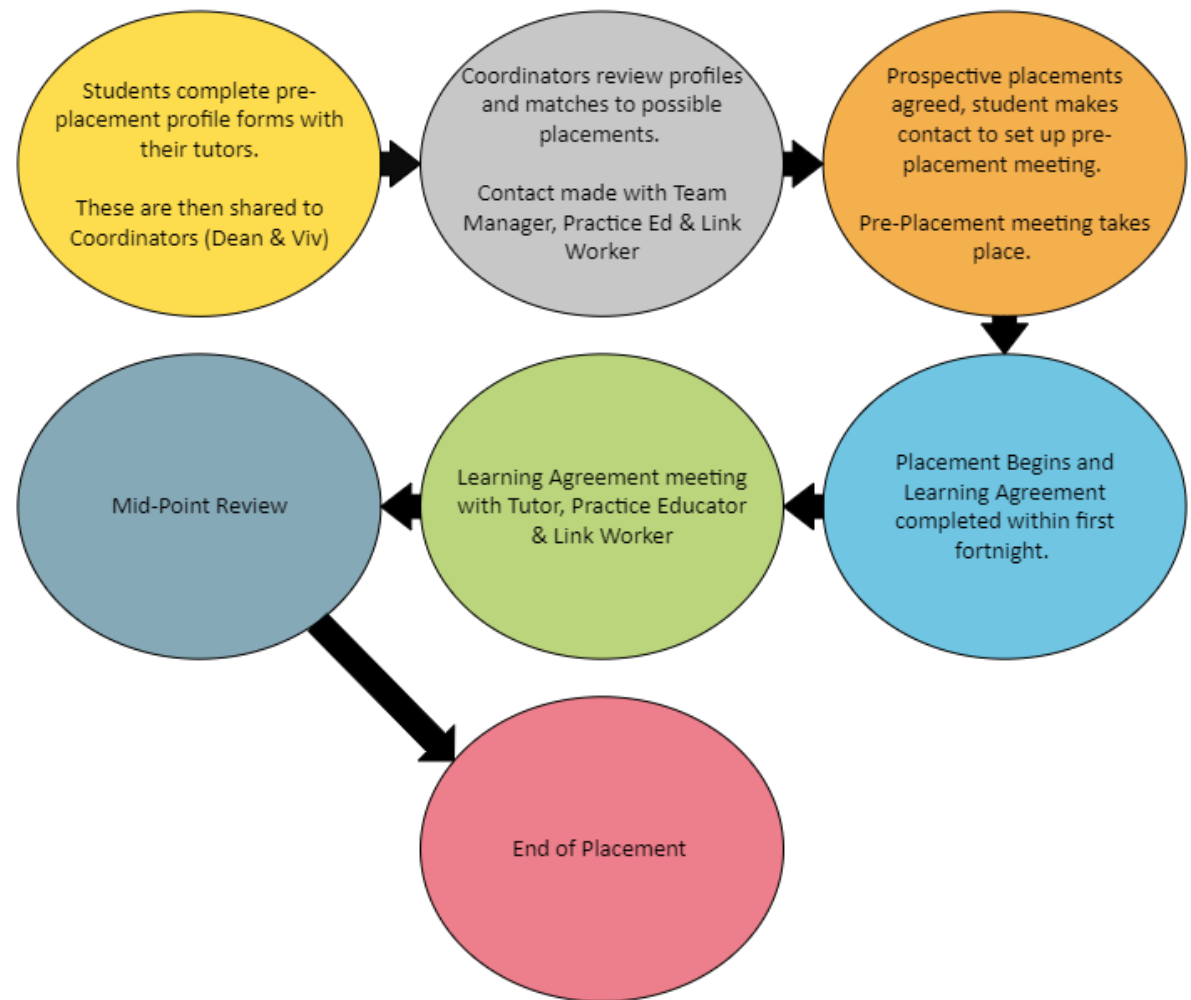
It is important to note that placements vary depending on professions and learning outcomes agreed, and each Student on placement in Falkirk is responsible for their own learning outcomes.

Students should ensure that their Learning Agreement reflects their learning outcomes and how they will achieve these while in Falkirk Council.

Pre-Placement Profiles

Students will complete a Pre-Placement Profile which outlines their experience, their strengths and areas for professional development. The Profiles will outline any arrangements that need to be considered to ensure good learning such as accessibility to council venues and the locality.

The Profiles are then shared to the Practice Learning Coordinators Vivian Fitzsimmons and Dean McGrandles who will then begin matching student placements. If there is limited information within the Profiles these may need to be returned to the University.



Placements

The Practice Learning Coordinators hold a centralised list of the Practice Educators and Link Workers. The coordinators will contact the Team Managers, Practice Educators and Link Workers to identify suitable placements and will match students. This will also include information such as the length of the placement, the level of study, and any other specific information needed.

Students are supernumerary and are unable to be counted as part of Falkirk Council's staffing and are unable to carry out some of the essential functions of the local authority such as Child Protection, Adult Support and Protection, and Complaints Handling. If Team Managers are unsure about this, they should speak with the Practice Learning Coordinators for guidance.

It's important for Team Managers, Practice Educators and Link Workers to reflect on the learning opportunities, team culture, availability and capacity to offer good placements. It's often good practice for Teams to discuss this before accepting a student.

Working as a Professional

The Team Manager and Practice Educator will work together to allocate work to meet the student's learning outcomes. There is no prescribed number of cases for student while on placement in Falkirk because each student's learning needs are different. Caseloads should be considered on a case-by-case basis and should consider the needs of our service users and the needs of our students.

There may be circumstances where the Student is no longer able to undertake certain types of work/assessments and it would be at the discretion of the Team Manager or Assistant Team Manager to identify actions.

Assessment

Students will be assessed by their Practice Educator while on placement and will be measured against key learning outcomes related to their regulatory body. The Practice Educator will provide an assessment of this alongside the student mid-way through their placement and this will indicate whether outcomes are being met and the student is in a position to pass their placement. This may also include reflection on what else needs to be considered to support with a pass. A final report will be produced, and this will provide evidence and rationale for whether the student has met their learning outcomes sufficiently and whether there is a pass or fail recommendation.

Practice educators will support the students to achieve a positive outcome. Occasionally students fail but this should be visible at the midway point where their tutors will be involved to offer additional support. Practice coordinators may also be involved if necessary.

Feedback

It is essential that Students provide feedback on their experiences as a learner within Falkirk. Students should be encouraged to share their views and provide feedback throughout their placements but it is also important for them to complete an [End of Placement Feedback Form](#).

Timelines

Student placements are variable in their length, and it is not unusual for them to need to be extended due to absences etc. Placement dates will be provided to Team Managers, Practice Educators and Link Workers prior to the placement beginning.

It is good practice for placement dates to be reviewed at the mid-point (or Interim) meeting with the Universities. This ensures all are clear about placement dates.

Social Work Placements

Open University

Undergraduate: January in 3rd Year and January in 4th Year

Postgraduate: March & November

Stirling University

PL1: August

PL2: May

Napier University

PL1: August

PL2: May

Occupational Therapy Placements

University Placement requests come from Queen Margaret University, Napier University, Caledonian University and Robert Gordon University.

This timeline shows placements for the first half of the Academic Year 2025-26.

	August	September	October	November	December
ENU		PP1 11/08/25 – 27/09/25 (7)	PP2 13/10/25 – 05/12/25 (8)		
		PP3 11/08/25 – 27/09/25 (7)	PP1 13/10/25 – 05/12/25 (8)		
RGU		PP3 01/09/25 – 25/10/25 (8)		PP4 27/10/25 – 05/12/25 (6)	
QMU				PBL 3 20/10/26 – 19/12/26 (9)	
GCU		MSc & BSc PrBL2 15/09/25 - 17 th /11/25 (10 P/T)			

N.B. Dates are subject to change.

Roles and Responsibilities

Students

Students should arrange their pre-placement visit to meet with the practice educator and/or link worker. This will agree the official start date of the placement and encourages students to take ownership of their learning from the outset.

Create a Learning Agreement to outline their learning outcomes and how the Placement can achieve this, becoming responsible for their own learning and professional development.

Demonstrate sufficient evidence of their learning of the Standards in Social Work Education & Ethical Principles, or the Occupational Therapy Four Pillars of Practice. This will depend on the student's Regulatory Body (SSSC or HCPC).

Work in a manner consistent with Falkirk's policies and the [SSSC](#) or [HCPCs](#) Codes of Practice.

Work agreed hours and engage with their University's policies on absence management alongside Falkirk Council's.

Maintain confidentiality, ensuring they work in accordance with Falkirk's confidentiality and social media policies and GDPR requirements.

Meet weekly for supervision with the practice educator, sharing responsibility for the agenda, and taking a full and active role.

Submit agreed written assignments on time to both the Practice Educator and the University. This includes reflective journals, directed work, reports, assessments and academic work.

Give feedback on the practice learning experience to their Practice Educator, Link Worker, and the Team Manager. Students can also [complete this form](#).

Practice Educators

Take overall responsibility for planning, co-ordinating, supervising and assessing practice learning.

Enter into a clear agreement with the link worker about their role in the process of the assessment. It is expected that the written contract between the practice educator and link worker is appended to, or included in, the practice agreement.

Work alongside any Link Workers to arrange the [Pre-Placement Checklist & Induction Template](#) and the [Induction Planning and Tracking Record](#).

Provide formal supervision weekly and lasting at least 1.5 hours.

Build a strong working relationship with the student to support them to meaningfully engage with reflection and professional development.

Produce an interim report and a final report incorporating link worker's comments where relevant. Final reports must be evidenced and include a pass or fail recommendation.

Identify any areas of difficulty and provide opportunities for the student to work on these. This includes identifying where the student's practice is borderline or is likely to fail.

Judge the quality of the evidence provided by students to show that they have met their learning outcomes in line with their regulatory body. This may include submitting further written evidence to their Professional Practice Progress Board if required.

Ensure feedback is gathered from Link workers to be included in interim and final reports.

Link Workers

Work alongside Practice Educators to co-produce learning experiences.

Clarify the student's role in the team/work setting and prepare the team and other relevant staff for the student's arrival.

Ensure provision of workspaces, phones and computer access.

Support with implementation of [Induction Planning and Tracking Record](#) and an induction timetable alongside the Practice Educator. Share responsibility and accountability for the student's work with service users.

Support the student on a day-to-day basis to offer best practice guidance, emotional support, tackle any practical issues and provide appropriate information and advice.

Meet regularly with the practice educator and student to discuss the student's progress and workload, the frequency and purpose of these meetings being noted in the Practice Agreement.

Some Universities permit the Link Worker to support with specific assessments of the student's capabilities and this should be explored within the Learning Agreement.

Give feedback to practice educator on student's learning, progress and development. The process of giving feedback must be clear to the student and must be included in the Practice Agreement.

Discuss concerns or difficulties directly with practice educator and student at the earliest opportunity.

Team Managers & Assistant Team Managers

Work alongside the Practice Educator and Link Worker to ensure they are supported to deliver a good learning experience to students.

Supervisory arrangements with Practice Educator and Link Workers should consider their skills, knowledge and values, and the role that the wider team may have in supporting student placements.

Work alongside Practice Educators to ensure appropriate work, cases or projects to allow the student opportunities to learn and to achieve the standard of practice as indicated in the Practice Agreement.

Provide feedback to Practice Educator and Link Worker that may be important to the student's learning and development. Team Managers and Assistant Team Managers are well placed to monitor the pace and flow-through of students' work to inform their development.

Provisioning equipment to make sure that Students have sufficient access to laptops, mobile phones, workspaces and buildings. Teams typically have access to equipment and should liaise with ICT via [this link](#) if they have any equipment requests.

Falkirk Council

Falkirk Council will support staff with their Continuous Professional Learning to develop their skills in mentorship, coaching, sharing best practice, and developing leadership.

Link Workers should have at least two (2) years of professional experience and have demonstrated capability to mentor others.

Practice Educators and Link Workers will be supported with their learning and development to consolidate the following learning:

- A. A grounding in education theory relevant to Practice-based Learning Placements.
- B. How to give and receive effective feedback. How to encourage safe and effective practice.
- C. How to encourage professional conduct.
- D. How to assess students, and how we can make the best of their learning while with Falkirk. “The Good Fail”, and how you will work alongside the Practice Learning Coordinators to make sure any student who does not meet their Placement learning outcomes can still make the most of their time with Falkirk.
- E. How to facilitate Students’ integration of theory into practice and development into autonomous and reflective practitioners.
- F. An overview of the learning and teaching methods used to help Students meet Practice-based Learning outcomes.
- G. How to plan and implement Student-centred Practice-based Learning through a range of different models of provision and supervision arrangements.

Practice Educators and Link workers will be invited to Falkirk’s Practice Educator and Link workers Forum to meet and network with learning peers from across the council. This will support with networking, peer learning, reflective practice, problem-solving, and sharing best practice.

Universities & Tutors

Universities are also known as Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). They are responsible for defining the Practice-based Learning assessment process for each Student and for the quality assurance of the Practice-based Learning award.

A Tutor will be appointed to each student to support them alongside their placement in Falkirk.

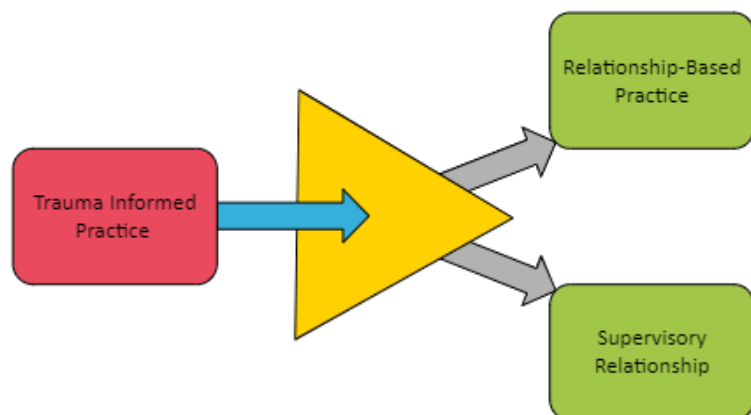
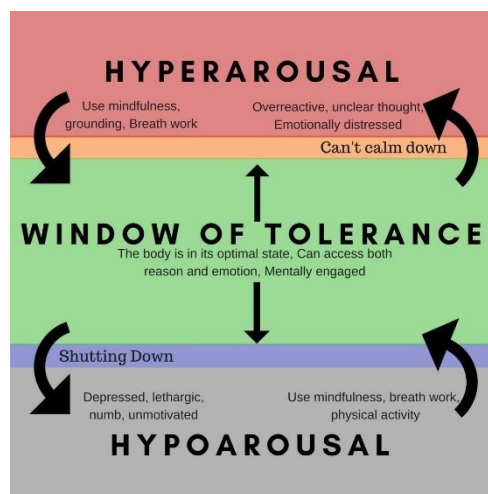
Universities will be responsible for preparing Students for Practice-based Learning in Falkirk. Students may wish to review [Forth Valley Practitioner’s Pages](#) for further context about working in Falkirk.

Universities will provide relevant and regular feedback regarding Practice-based Learning.

Universities will work collaboratively with Falkirk Council to develop a range of appropriate Practice-based Learning opportunities. These will align to current and future workforce requirements and national policy and support Students to become evidence-informed, reflective, outcomes focused and autonomous practitioners.

Window of Tolerance

It is key for the Practice Educator and Link Worker to emphasise the need for relationship-based practice with students as this will underpin their Trauma-Informed practice from the outset.



It is important that the Learning Teams work collaboratively if things are going wrong. This means that it is a shared responsibility of all members of the learning team (Student, Link Worker, Practice Educator, Tutor, Team Manager & Practice Learning Coordinators) to reflect and work out a plan to address issues.

The Policy Context

Social Work

This framework has included key policy drivers such as [Framework for Social Work Education](#) and the Scottish Social Services Council's (SSSC) [Standards in Social Work Education and Ethical Principles](#).

This framework includes information from [SWEP](#) (Social Work Education Partnership) and [Social Work Scotland](#). [The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services](#) (Iriss) provides very handy and informative [learning materials](#) to supplement the learning and development of students and newly qualified social workers which has been considered in this document.

Occupational Therapy

This framework includes key documentation relating to the training and development of OTs within Falkirk Council, outlined in the Health and Care Professions Council's (HCPC) [Standards in Practice Education and Training](#), the [Standards of Proficiency](#) and [Standards of conduct, performance and ethics](#). OTs and interested professionals should consult the HCPC's [guidance on their registration requirements where needed](#). This framework also aims to support with the Scottish Government's joint strategy for AHPs contained in [The Scottish Government Allied Health Professions Education and Workforce Policy Review \(2023\)](#).

This document considers key information relating to the [AHP Principles of Practice-Based Learning](#) including the 7 principles of Practice-Based Learning.

Falkirk's Practice Based Learning (PrBL) Framework is guided by the NES [Indicators for the Quality Standards for Practice Learning \(QSPL\)](#) and NHS Education Scotland's (NES) vision for supporting OTs in their training and development. NES outlines the requirements for [Occupational Therapists to become Practice Educators](#) by completing the relevant modules on [Turas](#).

Artificial Intelligence

There needs to be some recognition that AI has become part of the technological background in Scotland and there are a variety of different AI and Machine Learning tools for Students to use while on placement.

Guidance from the SSSC has outlined that there are some instances where AI can be used. These might be enhancing social work practice such as spelling & grammar checks; rephrasing and language improvement; and identifying gaps in evidence. What is not permitted is generating fictional experiences; generating fictional reflections; or outsourcing your work. Any students who are found to be mis-using AI may be at risk of their placement being ended as a result of breaching the Codes of Conduct (2.1, 5.1 & 5.6).

The Scottish Government has developed an [AI Strategy for Scotland](#) which accounts for the changes arising from AI and the potential landscape of technology as this continues to develop. Further information can also be gained from the [Scottish AI Alliance](#).

The SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) have provided **guidance** on when AI can and cannot be used to support Students with their learning.

Students who do access AI should consult their University and consider advice provided from It would also be supportive for Students to review the applicability of AI to their work by using [GenAI in the Education Exploration Hub](#).

AHP: Allied Health Professional
AI: Artificial Intelligence
CPD: Continuous Professional Development
GDPR: General Data Protection Regulations
HCPC: Health and Care Professions Council
HEI: Higher Education Institute
HSCP: Health and Social Care Partnership
ICT: Information & Communication Technology
Learning Team: Student, Link Worker, Practice Educator, Tutor, Team Manager
& Practice Learning Coordinators
NES: NHS Education Scotland
NHS: National Health Service
NMAHP: Nursing, Midwifery & Allied Health Professionals
PrBL: Practice Based Learning
PEL: Practice Education Lead
PPF: Placement Profile Form
SWEP: Social Work Education Partnership
SQA: Scottish Qualifications Authority
SSSC: Scottish Social Services Council

CPD Manager: [Falkirk Social Work Services CPD \(cpdservice.net\)](http://Falkirk Social Work Services CPD (cpdservice.net))
 Forth Valley Practitioner's Pages: [here](#)
 Olle: [here](#)
 The Knowledge Network: [library for health and social care](#)
 Turas: [here](#)

IRISS: [Irriss: Better lives for people, workers and communities](#)
SSSC CPL: [here](#)
SSSC Step into Leadership: [here](#)
SSSC Learning Resources: [here](#)
Social Work Scotland: [here](#)
Social Workers' Toolbox: [here](#)

AHP Becoming a Practice Educator: [Sway link](#)
 AHP Practice Education: [Toolkit](#)
 AHP Practice Education: [Network](#)
 AHP Supervision: [AHP Supervision Education Sessions](#)
 AHP PrBL Virtual Community: [Form to join the Community](#)
 AHP PrBL Flashcards: [Here](#)
 Four Pillars of Practice: [Career Framework](#)
 NES Resources: [Resources to support practice educators and teams delivering PrBL](#).
 Robert Gordon University: [PrBL CPL Support](#)