Practice Breakdown/Failing
Students and Concerns
Issues Guidance Notes

(Reproduced from BASW, MSW, ANSW placement handbooks)
There are many reasons why practice learning opportunities occasionally breakdown, fortunately this is a rare occurrence. Different procedures are followed depending on the reasons for the breakdown of the practice learning opportunity. Given below are outlines of the procedures to be followed when this occurs.

**Practice Arrangements Breakdown**

This is usually due to one of five reasons:

1. Inadequacy of learning opportunities to meet the practice requirements
2. If the student is unable to complete the practice due to ill health or personal circumstances
3. The student is not able to produce the evidence of being competent
4. Lack of professionalism
5. Other reasons

**Inadequacy of learning opportunities to meet the practice requirements**

- Where the Practice Educator, On-site Practice Supervisor or the student has concerns about the learning opportunities provided, the Practice Educator and the student should attempt to resolve this within the practice teaching sessions.
- If they are unable to resolve the concerns, the Practice Educator, On-site Practice Supervisor or the student must inform the student's tutor in writing or by e-mail.
- The student's tutor should contact the Practice Educator, the On-site Practice Supervisor and the Practice Learning Co-ordinator or Manager in the agency to clarify whether matters can be resolved. This could be by an informal meeting, e-mail or telephone call.
- If the concerns cannot be resolved, it is a requirement and the student's tutor's responsibility to convene a formal Concerns meeting with the student, Practice Educator, Practice Learning Co-ordinator, Manager and the On-site Practice Supervisor at the earliest moment. At the meeting a supporter may accompany the student and a person, with agency responsibility for training in the agency, may accompany the Practice Educator.
• If a Concerns meeting is requested by the Practice Educator, the On-site Practice Supervisor or the student, the tutor must respond as soon as possible and undertake a Concerns meeting.

• The purpose of the meeting is for the concerns to be aired and recorded (see Concerns Form) and, if possible, resolved. The meeting may decide to:
  o Maintain the current arrangements with a written action plan and a review date
  o Alter practice arrangements with a written action plan and a review date

• Terminate the practice learning (see Notice of Placement Termination Form)

• If matters cannot be resolved by a Concerns meeting, it is the tutor’s responsibility to judge whether the practice provides appropriate learning opportunities and whether or not to withdraw the student. Withdrawing a student from the placement may result in them having to wait for another practice learning opportunity until after the Assessment Board.

• If the student decides to withdraw unilaterally, their tutor must ensure that they understand the possible consequences of their decision; the student may not get another practice learning opportunity and may have to leave the course.

  The Assessment Board is under no obligation to offer a further practice learning opportunity in these circumstances and no plans about future practice learning opportunities can be made until after the Assessment Board.

• If it is the view of the Practice Educator or the On-site Practice Supervisor that some elements of the practice curriculum might have been failed or be marginal (rather than simply not completed), a Concerns meeting must be invoked and forms completed and sent to the university Practice Learning Manager.

• Even if the breakdown occurs at the beginning of practice learning, the student and Practice Educator should submit a practice report in the normal way so that a judgement can be made regarding competence achieved. This will be sent to the Assessment Board.

The student is unable to complete the practice because of ill health or personal circumstances

• Where the student is absent from practice because of ill health or personal circumstances. The student has a responsibility to inform their tutor and both the Practice Educator and On-site Practice Supervisor by telephone and confirm in writing or by e-mail; the tutor should inform the university Practice Learning Manager of this. If it is not possible for the student to return to complete the practice, a Notice of Placement Termination Form should be completed and sent to the university Practice Learning Manager and the Module Leader.
• If the Practice Educator or the On-site Practice Supervisor feels that ill health or personal circumstances are seriously affecting the learning opportunities of the practice learning, the Practice Educator or the On-site Practice Supervisor should contact the tutor. The tutor should arrange an informal meeting between the student, Practice Educator, On-site Practice Supervisor and the student’s tutor as soon as possible. This could result in a Concerns meeting and/or a practice termination meeting; the appropriate forms should be completed and sent to the university Practice Learning Manager and the Module Leader.

• Where a meeting is not possible e.g. because of serious ill health, an alternative process of consultation should take place e.g. by telephone discussion or e-mail. If it is decided to terminate the placement the appropriate forms should be completed and sent to the Practice Learning Manager and the Module Leader.

• The main purpose of the meeting or consultation will be to seek to retrieve the situation if possible. However, if this is not possible e.g. because of the length of absence, the meeting may have to decide:
  o That the practice should be terminated, or
  o That the practice should be continued with or without conditions and a Concerns meeting should be arranged with a written action plan and a review date.

• Where it is necessary to protect the interests of service users, the Practice Educator or the On-site Practice Supervisor have the right, on behalf of the agency, to overrule the wishes of the student and/or the student’s tutor and can suspend the practice under the agency’s published procedures. A Concerns meeting must be arranged by the tutor and this could result in a termination meeting. The appropriate forms must be completed by the tutor and sent to the university Practice Learning Manager and the Module Leader.

• If it is the view of the Practice Educator or the On-site Practice Supervisor that some elements of the practice curriculum might have been failed or are marginal (rather than simply not completed), then a Concerns meeting must be invoked by the student’s tutor which could result in a termination meeting. The completed forms should be sent to the university Practice Learning Manager and the Module Leader.

• Even if the breakdown occurs at the beginning of a practice learning the student and Practice Educator should submit a practice report in the normal way so that a judgement can be made regarding competence achieved. The report should be submitted even if the Concerns or Termination procedure is involved.

The student is not able to produce the evidence of being competent

• Where it appears to the Practice Educator or On-site Practice Supervisor that a student is not able to produce evidence of being competent and may be marginal or possibly leading to a failed decision, the student’s tutor should be informed immediately by writing or e-mail. The tutor must call a Concerns meeting immediately and an action plan put in place in order to avert a fail. This will need to be reviewed and a date set.
• If a student fails any of the competences, the Practice Educator and the student must submit their report even if the Concerns or Termination procedure is invoked.

• **The report will be sent to the Assessment Board who is under no obligation to offer a further practice learning opportunity in these circumstances.** No plans about a future practice learning opportunity can be made until after the Assessment Board.

**Lack of professionalism**

• Where it is felt that a student's actions, attitude or behaviour are likely to compromise themselves, the service user, the Agency or statutory obligations.

**Other reasons for breakdown**

• There could be several reasons to call a Concerns meeting:
  o The student, Practice Educator or On-site Practice Supervisor are absent regularly due to sickness, personal reasons, work demands etc.
  o The Practice Educator or On-site Practice Supervisor goes on long-term sickness
  o There is no regular supervision
  o Lack of professionalism e.g. punctuality, dress, lack of self-critical awareness, unable or unwilling to accept professional criticism, difficult relationships with staff

• If there are any concerns at all, the student's tutor should be contacted immediately by telephone or e-mail to see if the situation can be resolved. If not, their tutor must arrange a Concerns meeting immediately and an action plan made.

**Concerns meeting - general issues**

• A Concerns meeting can be called at any time, if there is a reason, (e.g. all other efforts have failed to resolve a concern) by the **Practice Educator, On-site Practice Supervisor, the student or the student's tutor**.

• Any concerns should be acknowledged and discussed at the meeting between the student, Practice Educator, On-site Practice Supervisor (if appropriate) and the student's tutor. The Concerns Form and an action plan will need to be completed and a record distributed to all concerned. **The meeting should arrange a review date.** A Concerns meeting can be called at any time if thought necessary, even if there is a Review of Practice of the student's practice in the near future.

• All Concerns and Placement Termination meetings should be chaired by the student's tutor.

• Where a placement has had a Concerns meeting and/or has been terminated, all the practice portfolios will be sent to the Quality Assurance Panel.

• All Concerns and Termination forms should be sent to the university Practice Learning Manager and the Module Leader.
Unprofessional Behaviour, Misconduct and/or Dangerous Practice

- In situations where it is believed that a student has acted in a way that makes it unacceptable for them to continue to practice, **all agencies reserve the right and duty to suspend the practice without notice. All agencies are required to have published procedures for dealing with such situations.** The agency has a responsibility to bring these procedures to the student's attention at the beginning of the practice learning.

- The agency has the right to decide if a practice learning opportunity should continue in situations where it is believed that a student has acted in a way that makes it unacceptable for them to continue to practise. The tutor and student should be informed in writing or by e-mail and provided with copies of the agency's procedure.

- Once concerns have been identified, a meeting should be arranged at the earliest opportunity between the representatives of the agency, the student, a supporter if the student wishes and the tutor. The meeting will be arranged by the student's tutor.

- The purpose of the meeting is to ensure that the student is fully informed about the allegations regarding their conduct. Also, to consider the implications of the student's misconduct and to make a decision to:
  - Return to the placement with a concerns action plan and review date or
  - Suspend the practice until further information is gathered and a new meeting set or
  - Terminate that particular practice learning opportunity

- In situations where a practice is terminated by the agency following allegations of unacceptable practice, the student will not be allowed to practice in another setting until the appropriate university assessment bodies have considered all the available evidence and made a decision about the student's progress.

- A placement may be terminated if a student's practice is deemed to place at risk her/himself, service user, members of the public or other members of the Agency; or where it is felt that the student's action, attitudes or behaviour are likely to compromise the Agency's policies, procedures, and statutory obligations; or where a student would be faced with disciplinary procedures if she/he was a member of the Agency.

  The student must be made aware by the Practice Educator or her/his Manager of the conduct expected at the commencement of the placement.

- Even if the breakdown occurs at the beginning of a practice learning opportunity, the student and Practice Educator should submit a practice report in the normal way so that a judgement can be made regarding competence achieved.

- The report will be sent to the Assessment Board who is under no obligation to offer a further practice learning opportunity in these circumstances.
Where there is dangerous practice or misconduct, placement can be terminated or suspended without a Concerns Meeting.

**PLACEMENT TERMINATED**

- Practice Educator and student report submitted to moderation panel
  - FAIL: Tutor's Mark
  - PASS: Tutor's Mark

**MODERATION PANEL**

**SUBJECT ASSESSMENT BOARD**

**TERMINATION MEETING**

- Review - placement continues
  - Tutor's Mark
    - FAIL: Tutor's Mark
    - PASS: Tutor's Mark

**CONCERNS MEETING**

- Action Plan
  - Suspend and gain, more information

**Inadequacy of learning opportunities**

**Ill health or personal circumstances**

**Insufficient evidence of competence**

**Lack of professionalism**

**Other**