



Faculty of
**Health and
Human Services**

A Guide for Setting up Your Learning Contract

**For Social Services Diploma Students
Embarking on a Field Education Experience**

YOUR LEARNING CONTRACT

The *Learning Contract* is a tool you will develop to guide your learning experience during practicum.

- ✓ It identifies what you hope to gain from your field placement (goals) as well as the specific steps (activities) you will undertake.
- ✓ It provides a guidepost for everyone involved to ensure there are adequate learning opportunities for you.
- ✓ It serves as a tool to measure and evaluate how you are progressing with your field education goals.
- ✓ It is a fluid document that may change as the placement proceeds and new opportunities or constraints arise. You must inform both your Agency Field Education Instructor and VIU Faculty Liaison of any changes.

STEPS

Step 1: Reflection

It is important to give some thought to what you hope to learn in your field education months before hand. Early on you will be asked by the Practicum Coordinator to submit three requests of placements. When considering your requests, reflect on what it is you hope to gain (what skills, knowledge, experience, contacts, etc.) in your practicum.

Step 2: Development

Once your placement has started, you will write your learning contract. Given the setting you are in, consider what kind of learning you will need to master to be successful in the placement, as well as what you personally hope to achieve. Your learning contract must follow the template provided below.

Step 3: Feedback

Submit a draft of your learning contract to the VIU Faculty Liaison. The Faculty Liaison will give you feedback on your learning contract in a timely fashion.

Step 4: Finalize

The goals and activities outlined in the learning contract will serve as a basis for discussion during the practicum meetings between yourself, your VIU Faculty Liaison and your Agency Field Instructor. In the first meeting, the Learning Contract will be finalized.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEARNING CONTRACT

An important question to be asking yourself, in developing your learning contract is *“What new learning do I hope to be able to achieve during practicum?”* Your thoughts then need to be translated into goals and activities.

Goals are broad statements that demonstrate a desired end.

Activities are tasks that outline the steps or actions that need to be performed in order to achieve the goals.

You may want to consider three key categories when developing your learning contract – knowledge, skills and personal development:

1. **Knowledge** – relates to learning and understanding concepts, theories, ideas, information etc. (e.g. addictions, mental health, corrections)
2. **Skills** – these can include interpersonal communication skills (e.g. active listening, attending), or other skills such as record keeping, team skills, leadership, program planning and development
3. **Personal development** – refers to personal values, beliefs, attitudes and ethics

Learning Contract Template

Below is a template to be used for writing your learning contract. Bolded activities are mandatory. Optional activities are not mandatory. You may add additional activities.

Goal	Activities	Date Completed
Learn about (X) agency's mandate, structure, policies and programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read (X) agency's policy manual • Attend agency staff meetings • Review (X) agency pamphlets and website • Optional:....Familiarize myself with (X) agency log book or database regarding (X) clients. • Optional:...Attend agency training on (X) •other activities? 	
Learn about (X) issues of the clients at the agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend agency events/group/drop-in for (X) • Ask staff about good sources of information about (X) and read • Learn about the community resources available to (X) clients • Optional:....Accompany clients to different meetings/agencies • Optional: Discuss with clients their experiences of (X). •other activities? 	
Develop (X) skills in working with clients at the agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss ethical issues with mentor • Observe mentor's skills with clients at (X) events/activities/meetings. • Discuss with mentor in supervision the important skills and approaches to practice with (X) clients • Practice (X) skills during (X) activity/group/meeting while mentor observes and ask for feedback. •other activities? 	
Demonstrate professionalism in a social services context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a schedule for practicum hours and keep track of practicum hours. • Report to supervisor in advance of a change in my practicum schedule. • Keep information confidential regarding (X) clients. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate accountability to practicum responsibilities by reporting activities (X) to mentor. • Optional:....Keep accurate and up-to-date notes in agency log book of (X) clients. •other activities? 	
Learn about myself as a professional in (X) agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for feedback about my abilities and areas for improvement from mentor during supervision time • Ask for feedback from other staff at appropriate time • Ask for feedback from (X) clients when appropriate • Observe other staff’s professional and personal boundaries • Practice asserting professional and personal boundaries with (X) clients and ask mentor for feedback. • Practice different self-care techniques. • Optional:....Review evaluation forms from (X) activities •other activities? 	
...other goal?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	



Learning Contract

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Goal	Activities	Date Completed
Learn about (X) agency's mandate, structure, policies and programs		
Learn about (X) issues of the clients at the agency		

Develop (x) skills in working with clients at the agency		
Demonstrate professionalism in a social services context		
Learn about myself as a professional in (x) agency		
...other goal?		