

# Future information professionals

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Practicum varies within library and information studies courses at the University of South Australia with the expectations of the Faculty that sponsors the award and with the point value allocated to subjects within the award. In all courses the University enforces a policy of allocating academic credit to practicum a similar weighting to that given for academic study. This reinforces the importance of experiences gained within the workplace to the students' program of study and avoids placing additional pressures on students that are beyond the point value of the total award. Thus course designers must meet the challenge of incorporating a point weighting for all required practicum into the fabric of an award.

Usually students have a program of work they are expected to cover in the workplace and the supervising professional undertakes the assessment with the direction and collaboration of an academic staff member. Occasionally difficulties arise when expectations of the supervisors vary from the academics: creating complex appeal issues at times, particularly when the students' course is in jeopardy if successful completion of practicum is in doubt.

Increasingly students also go to information agencies to examine practice in the workplace to reinforce the theory considered in written assignments. This is an alternative form of practicum that

demands a good knowledge of practice, but does not require the student to work in the library environment.

Practicum may provide an opportunity for students to recognise that their chosen career path is inappropriate and it is possible for them to transfer into alternative courses that may be better suited to their interests. Apart from the obvious academic advantages of marrying theory and practice, another major value of the practicum and volunteer work is that some find employment as a result of the networks they develop when they spend time in libraries.

## Graduate Diploma in Information Studies

The Graduate Diploma includes general librarians, teacher librarians as well as corporate information and records management students. There is no formal practicum within an information agency required in this one-year thirty-six point award. To meet University regulations either part of a subject must be allocated to the practicum or it becomes a full subject within the award. Following intense debate amongst the teaching team and within the advisory committee, it was agreed that instead of formal practicum, all staff would set assessment that required students to spend time in the workplace examining practice. This provides a variety of perspectives and practices in all subject areas to enable students to

balance theory against the workplace patterns they observe. In tutorial sessions, it also gives a range of practices that facilitate lively discussion and a clear purpose for examining the reasons behind different practices.

## BA in Library and Information Management

There are formal practicum requirements for the three-year undergraduate award tied to the management subjects. Management and Professional Studies 1 requires students to complete two-weeks of field placement at the end of their second year. Management and Professional Studies 2 requires three further weeks of field placement during third year. Students choose their own placement according to their interests and with guidance from the supervising staff member.

## Undergraduate Teacher-Librarianship

All supervisory teachers must receive payment for student supervision. The Education Faculty has all budget allocations for these costs and all practicum is related to the professional subjects students study. Students undertake practicum in classrooms at each year level. We encourage library students to plan for opportunities to relate the content from library strand subjects to their classroom work each year. In fourth-year students have at least fifteen days of practicum in school libraries. ■



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