

Frequently Asked Questions

(Field Experience)



How is my placement organised?

All placements *must* be organised by the Placements Officers through the Field Experience Office (FEO). For placement in areas away from the Greater Brisbane, Gold and Sunshine Coasts students *may* be asked to assist the Placement Officers with this process. Placements are negotiated with sites according to the field studies unit requirements, not individual students' preferences.

To facilitate the placement process QUT preservice teachers will:

1. Enter on-line their geographical preferences for placement. The FiPS (Field Placement System) software helps us with this **or**
2. Be allocated a site by the FEO according to the home address they have registered in QUT Virtual and any offers that QUT may have received from sites. (Therefore if you wish to be placed in an area other than in the area you have recorded as your home address, please let the FEO know.)

Preservice teachers are advised of the placement process for each Field Studies unit via their QUT email address. The placement process may vary from unit to unit and semester to semester depending on the number of placement offers from sites, the number of preservice teachers requiring placement and the time of the year. QUT preservice teachers will be advised via their QUT student email address that they may check their site confirmation details in FiPS. **It is therefore imperative that all QUT students enrol in their Field Studies units early, check their student email regularly and ensure that their contact details are up to date on QUT Virtual.**

What is FiPS?

FiPS is the QUT Field Placement System. It provides us with an on-line tool, accessed via QUT Virtual, which students use to register geographical preferences and view site allocations. Field Experience Office staff use FiPS to record placement offers made by sites and to keep the various records needed for maintaining the placement process. The FiPS Student Quick Reference Guide can be accessed at: http://feo.ed.qut.edu.au/documents/EDUCATION_Student_Quick_Reference_Guide.pdf Please use this guide in association with email information from your Placement Officer.

Why is it difficult to organise a placement? Why can't I simply go to a site just down the road from where I live?

It is extremely difficult to secure sufficient placements for preservice teachers. The Field Experience Office works within the following constraints when placing our preservice teachers:

1. Not all schools are prepared to accept preservice teachers and some sites only accept preservice teachers from one university e.g. ACU or Griffith or QUT. Schools may change allegiances during the school year and a change of staff at a site could also mean a change in the number of placement offers.
2. Some sites may only wish to accept preservice teachers from a particular level/course e.g. a site may take only Field Studies 4 preservice teachers or may take only Early Childhood preservice teachers.
3. Sites, whilst being large in their own staff and school student numbers, may only offer one or two placements to preservice teachers per year.

4. QUT preservice teachers cannot be placed at a site where there may be a potential conflict of interest e.g. having a relative working or enrolled at the site or having worked at the site.
5. There are at least nine Universities requesting preservice teacher placements from sites in the south east corner of Queensland alone. QUT has over 5000 Education preservice teachers each requiring a number of field experiences during their course. Other universities have similar Education student numbers and sites are under constant pressure from universities to take preservice teachers all year round. Sites struggle to meet the demands.



It is extremely difficult to secure placements for preservice teachers.

Am I allowed to approach a site myself?

No. The University works with schools/centres/alternative sites that have nominated to work in partnership with QUT. Preservice teachers will be placed in one of these sites as close as possible to their preferred geographical area. Some sites prefer to work with other universities and do not take QUT preservice teachers. Please note that placement arrangements are made between the Site Coordinators and QUT, not with individual teachers at sites. If you live away from the south east corner of Queensland or wish to be placed away from this area please read the following paragraph carefully.

Is the placement process different if I live away from the south east corner of Queensland or if I wish to do field experience out of this area?

Yes. In this case preservice teachers will be asked to contact the Field Experience Office. Although it is the responsibility of the FEO to place you, we are able to hasten the process if you are proactive with your assistance by emailing us as soon as possible once you have enrolled in the Field Studies unit to advise us that you will need to be placed away from the south east corner of Queensland. We'll then advise you of the process.

I am already a volunteer at a site. Can I complete my field experience at that site?

This will depend on several factors (such as potential conflicts of interest and placement availability) and is assessed on an individual basis. Please discuss this with your Placement Officer as soon as possible.

I already work at a site (coaching football/giving music lessons/helping in the classroom). Can I complete my field experience at this site? Can I get recognition for this work?

No. Faculty policy is quite clear – students may not undertake field experience at a site where they have worked or are working. Your work will not satisfy Queensland College of Teachers and QUT course requirements for *'full time, unpaid field experience which is supervised by a registered teacher'*.

When will I be notified of my placement – how long before the start of the field experience?

Placements will be confirmed to students as soon as possible. Details will be available via the FiPS system. Generally, the FEO aims to let students know at least 2 weeks before the first day of the placement. As secondary school placements are exceptionally difficult to secure, preservice teachers in the secondary strand may be advised of their placement much closer to the start date.

The FEO will provide regular updates on placements via student email or by viewing FiPS. Please do **not** approach the Field Experience Office to ask if your placement has been

confirmed. It is imperative that you check your QUT email regularly and that you have an up-to-date phone number recorded on your student details (QUT Virtual).



Will I know the year level and supervising teacher before the first day of my field experience?

For Early Childhood and Primary courses, generally **yes**. You will be advised of this when you make contact with the school/centre. Sometimes, but not always, this information is also provided along with your site confirmation details on FiPS. Secondary preservice teachers will be advised by the school site coordinator on their first visit to the site. Contact details for the placement site and the site coordinator are given on FiPS, once the placement is confirmed. Students will not be emailed individually.

I've been asked to make contact with my Liaison Academic (LA). Who is this person and why do I need to make contact?

Each student undertaking field experience is allocated a University Liaison Academic (LA or ULA) for the duration of the field experience. Their role is to support you, your supervising teacher and support the site while you are out on field experience. Your LA is a very experienced teacher who is familiar with the day to day classroom challenges that you may encounter. It is your responsibility to make contact with your Liaison Academic and to take advantage of their support and assistance. Their contact details are available to you via FiPS, in the same section as your site confirmation details.

What are the requirements of the field experience?

Requirements for each field experience unit are specific to the units concerned. The requirements are set out in the unit outlines which you will be able to access on-line, via Blackboard, once enrolment is completed.

Do I need to visit the site and meet my supervising teacher before commencing the field experience?

Yes. Once your placement has been confirmed you will be given details of the person to contact at the site. You should make contact and arrange a visit prior to the start date of the field experience. Some sites arrange specific orientation days/sessions to assist preservice teachers and these must be attended if arranged by the site.

If students are undertaking a **rural or remote placement** then initial contact is via email or phone.

Can I complete my field studies units at a different time from the set dates?

No. The dates are set on the academic calendar. Different units are scheduled at different times. All preservice teachers in a particular unit will undertake field experience at the same time. Exceptions may arise when preservice teachers are interstate and school term dates differ from those in Queensland.

Can I complete my field experience in a private school or an alternative site other than a school i.e. a Special Education Unit?

Yes, subject to certain conditions such as placement availability, unit requirements, student grade point average. We use many different schools/centres: e.g. State, Catholic, private, independent and other schools with religious affiliations, Montessori schools and Environmental Education Centres. If you are considering any of these please email the appropriate Placement Officer to discuss the options. Please note however that no guarantee can be given that a placement will be available. You may ultimately need to complete the field experience in a setting that meets the field studies unit requirements but which may not have been one of your preferences.

Can I complete any of my field experience interstate/overseas/in remote areas?



Generally **yes**, however this will need to be discussed on an individual basis. Students living interstate or overseas should note that all students are required to undertake at least one field experience in a Queensland school. QUT Education students who are studying overseas should make themselves known to the Field Experience Office via email or telephone as soon as they have enrolled in the unit. In the first instance please contact the appropriate Placements Officer.

To undertake an international field experience, students should be aware that a minimum grade point average of 5 is a criterion for participation, as are 'satisfactory' results for all previous field experiences. More information concerning an international placement is available on the FEO web site or from the Field Experience Office.

Preservice teachers wishing to take up the opportunity of a rural, remote, interstate or international field experience will need to contact the appropriate Placement Officer to discuss the options.

What if I live in a remote area or in an area that does not have a large number of sites and I am not able to travel?

Prior to enrolling in a Field Studies unit, QUT students need to be aware that there is often travel involved in getting to and from field experience sites. With the best will in the world, we are unable to manufacture placements in some areas. Preservice teachers have overcome this problem in the past by arranging accommodation closer to the field experience site or by withdrawing from the unit and beginning again at a time when travel is possible. Consult your Course Coordinator if you are considering the latter option. It is the preservice teacher's responsibility to ensure that suitable transportation options are assessed before enrolling in the Field Studies unit.

I work part time/I have young children. Will I be able to leave the field experience site early to get to my job or to pick up my children? Can I fit field experience around my work obligations?

You will be required to attend the site for a full 'school' day. For example, if placed in a school setting, you are expected to be at the school 45 minutes before school starts and may be required to stay at least the same length of time at the end of the school day. If in a kindergarten or childcare setting you will be expected to undertake the same workday as a regular staff member and this will involve some early starts and late finishes. This is an essential part of the field experience.

Even if studying part time, preservice teachers completing a Field Studies unit must understand that the field experience component is a full time commitment.

Alternative arrangements will need to be made to drop off/pick up children from school or child care during the field experience. Alternative arrangements for your work commitments will need to be made for the duration of the field experience. Field experience must be undertaken during the dates shown on the field experience calendar.

I am working part time/full time as well as undertaking study. I risk experiencing financial hardship if I can't work during field experience. Is there any financial assistance available from QUT while I'm out on Field Experience?

The QUT Equity Section coordinates and supports a range of services for students. More details are available from: <http://www.equity.qut.edu.au/programs/forstudents/>

QUT Counselling Services also operate a Student Financial Assistance Scheme (SFAS). More details are available at: <http://www.counselling.qut.edu.au/money/loans/>

Can I be placed in the school/centre my child attends or where I have a family member employed?

No. Faculty policy is clear that students cannot be placed where there is a possible conflict of interest, e.g., children/partner/employment at a school or centre. Students should consider this when stating their placement preferences - it is very embarrassing for students when this is inevitably discovered after a placement is confirmed, necessitating withdrawal from the setting.

I have a disability/medical condition and I have enrolled in a field experience unit. Should I disclose my disability/medical condition?

It is not compulsory however it may be in your best interests to discuss your individual situation with your Course Coordinator, the Disability Officer or your Placements Officer so that additional support/arrangements can be provided.

What is a Criminal History Check or a *Blue Card*? Do I need one for my field experiences? How do I get one? How do I renew it?

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act (2000) requires student teachers to undergo a criminal history check and be issued with a Suitability Card (Blue Card) by the Commission before they are allowed to undertake field experience. A valid Blue Card is a mandatory requirement - one that must be met in order to undertake and complete field experience throughout the course.

For further information please see:

QUT: http://www.studentservices.qut.edu.au/enrol/course/spec_req/bluecard.jsp

Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian:
<http://www.childcomm.qld.gov.au/index.html>

It is highly recommended that students be proactive in applying for a card as soon as they are accepted into their course. It is now a requirement of all Queensland sites that preservice teachers show their valid Blue Card prior to starting field studies.

Blue cards are valid for 2 years. Please check your card's expiry date.

What do I do if I have lectures and tutorials at QUT during field experience?

Students should not have classes to attend while they are on a scheduled field experience. If you do have scheduled classes you must seek advice from the course coordinator and the FEO early in the semester and plan the semester to ensure you are able to fulfil all requirements of the Field Studies unit. Field experience must be completed during the set time indicated on the field experience calendar. Students are not to miss days of field experience in order to attend classes or lectures or catch up on assignments.

What do I do if I am feeling very stressed on field experience about things that are not related to field experience?

We advise students in this situation to access a range of excellent services on campus such as Counselling Services (3138 3488 or <http://www.counselling.qut.edu.au>) or to seek other professional help for serious concerns.

What do I do if I decide to withdraw from the Field Studies unit?

The FEO approaches sites to secure placements months ahead of time. Please appreciate that securing places requires lots of negotiation between QUT, site coordination staff and site teachers. Our sites are under no obligation to place preservice teachers; field experience places are very limited and teachers become very disappointed and annoyed when an expected preservice teacher does not arrive. Therefore we ask you to inform us

immediately if you withdraw or defer, so that QUT can continue to be professional and courteous to staff at the supervising site, and in the hope that the site will continue to take our students. We request that you phone and email the FEO to advise us of your withdrawal as well as changing your enrolment on QUT Virtual. This is extremely important in the two weeks prior to the field experience start date. Thank you.



What do I do if I am pregnant and am enrolled in a Field Studies unit?

Preservice teachers should inform the unit coordinator and the FEO. In some instances we ask that preservice teachers receive a “go-ahead” from their medical practitioner before the field experience starts. We acknowledge that pregnancy is not an illness. However, preservice teachers should be aware that field experience requirements can often involve lifting equipment, sporting activities, arriving early, working long days, and contact with paints and other chemicals. We encourage preservice teachers to share this information with supervising teachers and teaching partners on field experience.

Education Queensland guidelines state that teachers should not attend school for the 6 weeks before the birth and 6 weeks after the birth. QUT works within these guidelines.

Field Studies units are scheduled at specific times throughout the year and it is not usually possible to begin the field experience early or delay the field experience until after the birth. Preservice teachers in this situation should seek advice from their course coordinator prior to the start of a Field Studies unit semester.

I’ve heard that some sites require preservice teachers to wear a suit/formal dress/won’t accept preservice teachers with body piercings/want to interview preservice teachers prior to accepting a placement. Is this true?

Every field experience placement is subject to acceptance by the allocated site and some sites may require an interview with a preservice teacher prior to placement confirmation. Every site has the right to accept or reject a placement based on that site’s personal presentation and dress standards. These requirements may relate to such things as visible tattoos, body piercings, the wearing of jeans/t-shirts, types of footwear or acceptable hair style or hair colour. Students are expected to meet their allocated site’s requirements for the duration of their placement. Please refer to page 12 of the Field Experience Policies and Guidelines Booklet:

<http://feo.ed.qut.edu.au/documents/guidelines.pdf>

I’d like more information about employment opportunities/Education Queensland interview processes/working for Independent schools. Whom do I ask?

Please contact QUT Careers: <http://careers.qut.edu.au/>

How do I keep up to date with placement information/ensure that my emails to the Field Experience Office are answered?

1. Enrol early in the Field Studies unit.
2. Read your QUT emails very, very regularly.
3. Always use your QUT student email address, and provide your student number and unit code when you correspond with the Field Experience Office.

If I have a query concerning anything I have read here, whom do I contact?

If you have a query concerning anything included in this document please make contact with the appropriate Placement Officer. Details are available at:

<http://feo.ed.qut.edu.au/about/contact>