What is PSY399?

PSY399 is a 3 credit point unit undertaken during the third year of an undergraduate psychology degree (preferably in the final session) in preparation for leaving to find employment with a psychology degree or to prepare for further study.

In this unit, students undertake a short 32-hour placement with a local, regional or international organisation in order to find out about a significant social problem and to gain first-hand experience of professional practice as a psychologist, counsellor or another profession allied to psychology. Using this experience, students will have the opportunity to reflect on their undergraduate learning to date and on how they might use it in the real world, to integrate and synthesise the information from the various sub-disciplines in psychology, and to think critically and practically about real world problems. It also helps students to focus on the generic skills they will take into the workplace or further study, provides information on what jobs are available in psychology, how to apply for and prepare for those jobs, as well as offering a chance for students to reflect on their suitability for, and liking of, the profession.

The types of activities that students undertake during placement are varied and very flexible but must relate to psychology. There are generally two types of placement activities:

- taking part in the day-to-day activities of the organisation
- working on a specific pre-defined project

Although 32 hours is not a long placement, many students are happy to volunteer a longer amount of hours to an organisation. In addition, many partners choose projects on which two or more students can work. Even small groups of students can achieve quite significant outcomes. Projects can be short, lasting the duration of the placement activity (i.e. one Session), or projects can span sessions running from one year to the next. Longer multi-session projects can be divided into logical blocks of work so that in each university session a different block can be tackled by a different group of students. For example, year 1 might involve preparing a literature review, issues paper and project design, year 2 might involve implementing a project and year 3 might involve evaluating the project and examining areas for improvement.

In some circumstances students may be able to work at the University for short periods of time (or from home, although students are not covered by university insurance when working at home). However, as the main point of the Participation unit is to provide opportunities to engage with the community outside the university, we would expect that most of the work is done onsite. Organisations that wish to specify a placement that is longer than 32 hours can do so. In this case, students are told in advance that providing a preference for this placement obliges them to volunteer more hours than the 32 hours required for PSY399 should they be chosen for this placement.
Types of placements

Psychology/Counselling Practices

Within practices that offer counselling we expect that the students would get a wide exposure to the working life of a psychologist or counsellor within ethical boundaries. This might mean sitting in on a session with the consent of the client, discussing case notes, researching therapies (as Professional Development) and helping with the various everyday tasks that a psychologist must do.

Many PSY399 students wish to become clinical or counselling psychologists but have little understanding of what this truly entails. Being involved in day-to-day practice allows students to better understand their chosen career path and to reflect on their own suitability for it. For this reason it is valuable for students to be involved in as many aspects of the day-to-day practice as are ethically and practically possible, and are safe for both students and clients. Activities we would not expect students to participate in include work with clients who are at high-risk or may be frightening for the students to encounter.

Organisational Psychology Placements

A significant proportion of psychology students are interested in organisational psychology and/or are enrolled in double degrees that include both business-based and Psychology degrees. Placements in this field can include activities related to recruitment processes, analysis and development of interview questions, analysis and research to develop orientation, induction and policy manuals, and workplace health and safety management. These placements are spread across specific organisational psychology firms and also other organisations that require assistance in these areas.

Third year students have completed three years of study on statistics and research methods, and are able to create surveys and questionnaires, statistically assess their reliability and validity, and consider the ethical and methodological limitations of existing and newly developed tests. Examples of past surveys that have been conducted include surveys on satisfaction, stress, employee engagement etc. Past organisational psychology placement students have also evaluated existing programs and assisted in the development of new programs or amendments to existing programs.

Students who are concurrently studying Business, Human Resources and Marketing, or who have studied Organisational Psychology at third year level, will have additional domain specific information that would be of assistance in the recruitment placement. This may include the ability to assist in conducting interviews and reference checks, obtain and assess position descriptions and assist in training and development.
Placements in welfare organisations

Many psychology students are interested in issues related to welfare, social justice and disability. Thus, many psychology students have been placed with welfare organisations and other service providers in these areas. For example, groups of students have evaluated programs, written program manuals, and assisted with specific projects in wide-ranging fields from children’s services and family services through to aged care. In addition, students have assisted in the running of a wide range of programs. Those interested in developmental psychology typically choose to work with children or youth or the elderly. Those interested in health psychology often choose public health programs. Many students are also interested in mental health services, indigenous services, disability services, homelessness, and assisting low income and vulnerable Australians.

Research students

Many PSY399 students wish to undertake their honours year and go on to registration and/or a higher degree. Those students are typically attracted to “research internship” style activities that will prepare them for the 4th year in psychology and sharpen their research skills. Psychology students are trained in research and statistics in every year of their undergraduate degree and are typically quite skilled as research interns.

Examples of Participation Activities

**Hands on work with clients**
- Providing telephone crisis support for a national helpline
- Working with dementia patients
- Supporting children in foster care: helping individual children with homework and outings
- Assisting those who are socially isolated due to age, infirmity, disability or cultural barriers
- Working with troubled or disadvantaged young people
- Talking with the elderly to document their life stories.

**Program and Resource development**
- Develop resources for the “Breaking The Silence” Program on domestic violence
- Design and facilitate a program and materials for refugee children to aid learning
- Develop resources to build academic resilience in tertiary students
- Develop worship resources for dementia residents
- Develop website content on a range of psychological issues including suicide prevention, career and employment services.

**Research (check Human Ethics requirements at MQ)**
- Researching homeless populations in NSW
- Researching methods of building a relationship and engagement model in regional Australia
• Interning as a research assistant across a variety of research projects
• Conducting interviews to validate mood scales for use with volunteers in aged care.

**Reporting**
• Prepare a report detailing available funding opportunities and service provision gaps for organisations
• Prepare a literature review on behavioural change and how this can be applied to dementia prevention programs
• Research and report on international best-practice for NGO volunteer standards
• Prepare a review of organisational approaches to domestic violence responses.

**Program Evaluation**
• Conduct quality assurance research on the effectiveness of a range of programs including: student satisfaction in an on-campus residential college; the effectiveness of “Child Life Therapy” in a hospital setting, and the job application process for a leading research institute
• Analyse the role of student groups in terms of university social inclusion and student engagement
• Provide a review of mentoring and tutoring programs for school students
• Evaluate the social and practical support services for cancer patients
• Evaluate user interface design for a search engine and in-game experience (gamification).

**Observation or professional skills based**
• Participate in, and observe day-to-day activities for psychologists in private practice, working in hospitals, or community centres
• Participate in, and observe classes run for children with emotional and behavioural disorders
• Participate in, and observe the interaction between social work, psychological services and the justice sector
• Participate in, and observe home visits for clients with substance abuse problems or family difficulties.

**Assessment of Student Learning in PSY399**

Students are expected to complete a project report in one of two formats as follows:

a) a standard project report in 5 parts:
   i. planning for the placement;
   ii. the development of professional skills during placement;
   iii. using academic skills during placement;
   iv. reflecting on undergraduate experience and the placement; and
   v. devising practical solutions to the social issue addressed at placement.

OR
b) a notable incident analysis of a 'defining moment' during placement, in 5 parts
   i. planning for the placement;
   ii. the defining moment/event: context, events, thoughts, feelings and actions;
   iii. what was learnt from the defining moment/event?
   iv. reflecting on undergraduate experience and the defining moment/event; and
   v. devising practical solutions to the social issue addressed at placement.

Students will be reminded to respect confidentiality arrangements when completing these assessments.
During the placement the Host Supervisor is expected to sign off on hours completed in a log book provided by
the students, and to complete a very brief (one paragraph) final report in the log book at the end of the
placement.

**Placement Process for PSY399**

In the lead up to the commencement of placement units, the Faculty of Human Sciences PACE team liaise with
potential Host Supervisors to set up placement activities. In preparation for offering a placement activity to
students, the Host Supervisor may wish to develop the activity with the help of the Activity Design Form which
asks key questions related to the aims of the activity, the nature of the activity, and desired outcomes. Once an
activity has been thought through and designed in detail, an Activity Statement can be completed and submitted
online (Partner organisations are sent an email that includes a link to the form).

Once the Activity Statement is received it will be reviewed internally for Workplace Health and Safety (WHS),
ethics and to ensure that activity/project meets the learning outcomes of the unit. In the instance where there
are some unresolved questions about the Activity Statement, we will contact the partner organisation to review
the application and make amendments as needed.

The Activity Design Form and the Activity Statement will be facilitated through contact with the PACE Officer
for the Faculty of Human Sciences at Macquarie University and the PSY399 Placement Coordinator:

Ms Kerry Lancaster, PACE Officer
Phone: 02 9850 1460

Ms Deni Filipova, PSY399 Placement Coordinator
Phone: 02 9850 7693

Email: pace.humansciences@mq.edu.au

The internal Macquarie University processes to finalise an activity can be expected to take some weeks to
complete. We hope to finalise Activity Statements for Session 2 by the first week of July to allow time for the
student matching process to begin prior to the session starting.
For PSY399, because of the large numbers of students involved, the matching process will be somewhat automated. Students will be matched to an activity in one of two ways: either to a “student-nominated” placement or to a “university-initiated” placement.

Student-nominated placements give students the opportunity to nominate one organisation that has already offered to provide them a placement. Such placements are appropriate if a student is an existing volunteer with an established partner and they wish to complete their placement with this organisation, but can also apply to organisations that have not previously hosted PSY399 or PACE students.

The PACE team provides students with a list of Established Partners and ask the students not to contact these particular partners about a self-nominated placement unless they are already volunteering with that organisation. Potential Host Supervisors should refer students to the PACE team if the student is not currently volunteering with their organisation and they have previously hosted PSY399 or PACE students. The PACE team will then liaise with the Host Supervisor regarding the potential to develop a placement for a PSY399 student.

Most students will be matched to a “university-initiated” placement; that is, a placement pre-organised by the PACE team. When the documentation about an activity is in order the university will advertise the placements on iParticipate, the student placement matching system. At the beginning of session 2, in early August, students will be able to research partner organisations and choose up to ten preferred placements. iParticipate will include details of any necessary screening checks for each placement. Early in Session 2, iParticipate will automatically allocate students based on their preferences.

Most students will be placed within an organisation ranked high on their preference list. In 2014, we placed 430 students with 86% placed in a top 3 preference and 100% placed in one of their top 10 preferences.

Students allocated to a group project are expected to elect a Team Leader who is responsible for liaising with the Host supervisor and ensuring the group is undertaking the tasks expected and keeping progress on track, so that the outcomes set for the project are delivered satisfactorily to the partner.

Some research-based activities may require ethical clearance from the Macquarie Human Research Ethics Committee. PSY399 has a special ethics protocol that allows “low-risk” activities requiring ethics approval to be “fast-tracked”. Students are given detailed instructions on how to determine if an activity requires ethics approval and if so, the application process.

The Placement Coordinator for PSY399 will give students final approval to contact the partner organisation in the early weeks of the Session. The student can then begin their placement once all screening checks have been completed and a Student Undertaking (that sets out expected standards of students’ behavior) has been submitted and approved.
Key Placement Requirements

To become a placement partner, an organisation needs to:

1. Agree to host a student or groups of students to undertake an activity or project;
2. Design a suitable activity or project taking into account the time frame, length of placement, skills of students, availability of supervision and appropriate logistical support;
3. Complete a Participation Activity Statement detailing the activity that students will be undertaking during their placement and providing sufficient information to allow the Unit Convenor to ensure that the activity is meeting the learning requirements of the academic unit, and to enable the University to assess potential WHS risks and mitigation strategies;
4. Agree to the Roles and Responsibilities as outlined in the PACE Activity Handbook.

For all placements we require:

- a nominated Host Supervisor who will provide training, supervision and support to the student;
- that placement hours are undertaken within session dates in a format that is mutually agreed by the Student and the Host Supervisor. (A small number of placements may require early commencement and/or a longer-term commitment by the student. These placements are managed on a case-by-case basis and must be approved by the Unit Convener prior to advertising to the students.)

The Role of the Host Supervisor

The roles and responsibilities of the Host Supervisor are outlined in PACE Activity Handbook. Previous experience has shown that placements are most successful where there is strong mutual understanding between the host supervisor and the student about the requirements of the project or activity. Additionally, it is important that the host supervisor ensures sufficient capacity and commitment to provide feedback and support to the students, sets realistic objectives, and defines clearly the expectations and responsibilities.

The Host Supervisor needs to provide a structured orientation and induction at the beginning of the activity, arranging agreed timelines, tasks and outcomes. It is also important to engage as strongly as possible with students so that they feel part of the organisation and can make a positive contribution. The Host Supervisor should also be aware of the timelines associated with the assessment tasks that must be submitted by students, ensuring that the placement progresses within a timeline that will allow timely completion of the placement-related assessment tasks.

In addition, there is an expectation that the Host Supervisor will inform the Unit Convenor and the PACE Manager if there are any problems before or during the placement. This applies to any incident or accident, or to any concerns you might have about student behaviour or progress. The sooner the Host Supervisor alerts the
Unit Convenor and the PACE Manager about their concerns, the sooner we can intervene to work with you and the student to solve the issue. Host Supervisors should not sign off any student who has not completed the work to their satisfaction and inform the PACE team if there are any concerns about the student not completing their placement within the agreed time lines, so that appropriate measures can be put in place.

**Closure**

It is important for both the student and the placement organization to have a sense of ‘closure’ at the end of placement. This may mean, for example, meeting with the student at the final sign off of their logbook, reviewing how the placement went, giving each other feedback on the experience, thanking each other and saying ‘goodbye’. The number of ways that closure can be felt are many; the key is to find one that works for you and for the student.

**Activity Development workshops**

As in previous years, there will be Activity Development workshops, this year the workshops will be scheduled in May and early June 2015. The Activity Development Workshops will provide an update about PACE and an opportunity for potential Host Supervisors to be involved in discussions about activity design and development. The workshops will run for two to three hours and will include light (delicious) refreshments. If you are interested please contact us (pace.humansciences@mq.edu.au).
As this unit has high student numbers and a relatively short placement, we utilise iParticipate for student allocation management and have strict deadlines around the key actions to manage the placement process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>PSY399 Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2015</td>
<td>Online activity statements will begin to be send out to partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 May 2015</td>
<td>Student nominated placements close</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 July 2015</td>
<td>Activity statements will be finalised</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 July 2015</td>
<td>Students will be advised of the outcome of student nominated placements</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 July – 31 July 2015</td>
<td>iParticipate is open for students to preview university initiated placement opportunities (one week prior to the start of session 2 until the end of week 1 of session 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 – 7 August 2015</td>
<td>Students will be able to preference placements on iParticipate for university initiated placements (week 2 of session 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 – 14 August 2015</td>
<td>iParticipate (student placement matching and management system) will automatically allocate students into placements (week 3 of session 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 – 14 August 2015</td>
<td>Students can view finalised placement allocations on iParticipate and, if applicable, are advised about other students in their group (week 3 of session 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 – 21 August 2015</td>
<td>Students contact host supervisor to arrange a meeting (or interview if required) (week 4 of session 2). Placements can begin now subject to submission of the Student Undertaking and the completion of any checks required</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 September 2015</td>
<td>Students should have ideally commenced their placement (pending completion of screening checks). If students are not yet started, they need to start as soon as possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 10</td>
<td>Major report due (see details pages 7-8). Students do not need to complete by this date but it would be ideal for students to have completed around 20 hours by the end of September to facilitate timely submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 November 2015</td>
<td>Students must have completed their placement by this date under normal circumstances, as this is the last day of Session 2 classes, and exams follow. Log book due date under normal circumstances</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 November 2015</td>
<td>Session 2 ends and Macquarie University placement insurance ceases</td>
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Key Contacts

**PACE Manager, Ms Judy Hutchison**
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