

External Study - Frequently Asked Questions

2013

1. What are the advantages of studying Externally?

Studying by distance has advantages. If you live in a remote area you still have access to higher education without leaving home. You can structure your study schedule as you wish. You save on travel time. You can manage family, paid work and study responsibilities more flexibly.

2. Who studies the Flinders MSW/Grad Certificates Externally?

It has been our experience to date that it is Adelaide residents, of whom most are mature-aged women and juggle paid work and family responsibilities that characterise the main profile of our students who study externally. Interstate, regional, rural and remote and international students comprise a much smaller proportion of overall students.

3. How many topics should I study at one time?

In your decision making about the number of topics you should study in any given semester it can be useful to consider the following:

- Hours of paid work done (our experience is that working full time is not conducive to full time study)
- Level of family responsibilities (for example sole parent who does paid work as well is likely to constrain your topic load)
- Level of personal and organizational support (it is useful to think about whether you have people around you who will understand that you need to write essays, read articles etc. If you are doing paid work, will your employer support your study?)
- Interest in, and strength of your own motivation to return to study (eg. is this a long held dream or more of a work or credentialing requirement?)
- Past academic experiences and achievements (including how long ago you last studied)
- Other major life factors, goals and transitions (eg. moving house, states, countries, or having a baby, changing jobs, coping with a relationship break-up or death of loved one, and so on)

4. Who helps with my program planning?

Most of the MSW Program and the Graduate Certificates have predetermined structures with no or minimal elective choice. If you are part time or have successfully gained credit for some of the topics you are likely to need program planning. Program planning refers to which topics you decide to study at any given time. To have your enquiry directed to the correct person, please contact the School of Social and Policy Studies Administration Office by email ssps.courseadvice@flinders.edu.au.

5. Is there an orientation for incoming students?

Yes. Orientation week activities include on-campus seminars and, usually, a welcome BBQ. Further information is available on the School of Social and Policy Studies web page. Please bookmark this link <http://www.flinders.edu.au/sabs/saps/>.

6. What kind of computer access do I need?

Since distance education is now mostly electronic and online, rather than paper based, you will need a relatively new, internet connected, fast computer with relatively recent software so that you can access Flinders Learning Online (FLO) easily and download or upload without fuss or aggravation. If you have trouble accessing documents, please contact computer support via the university website (<http://www.flinders.edu.au/current-students/computing/>) – support is also offered for your home computer if used for study purposes. If you do not have this access please give serious thought to becoming an on-campus student or deferring your study plans until you do have.

7. How computer savvy do I need to be?

You certainly don't have to be a computer whiz, nor do you have to have specialist computer expertise. If you have never used email and don't feel confident doing electronic literature searches and so on, you will need to enrol in a computer course separate to this program to get up to date. There are classes available at Flinders University and you can look these up via Student Services on the university website. Even when you are familiar with e-searches and e-communication etc. there are likely to be some technological wrinkles from time to time that the helpdesk can assist you with.

8. Can I study some topics by distance and others on campus during the same semester?

Yes. If you are able to do this, say studying one topic on-campus (or 'internally') and another externally. That said, some students prefer one single mode of study (internal or external) and this is fine by us. You choose your study mode when enrolling into topics. There is no cap on student numbers.

9. Who helps with my enrolment?

- Central enrolment in Flinders University is the first port of call for you to gain assistance with any enrolment issue you may have. Go to http://www.flinders.edu.au/enrolling/enrolling--flinders_home.cfm
- For specific information on enrolment policies go to, <http://www.flinders.edu.au/enrolling/policies.cfm>
- For academic related enrolment issues, please contact the School Office to have your query directed to the appropriate person: School of Social and Policy Studies admin office via email ssps.courseadvice@flinders.edu.au

10. What is Flinders Learning Online (FLO)?

Flinders Learning Online is an electronic learning site. You will be able to access topic materials (including topic outlines, assessment and lecture materials) through Flinders Learning Online (FLO) after you have enrolled.

Please note that before you can access FLO you will need to be enrolled. You will also need your 'FAN' (Flinders ID/User name) and a password. After you get your FAN you will be able to set up your email account and then start to access FLO

<http://learn.flinders.edu.au/>

11. Who do I call if I can't access FLO?

In the first instance, you need to contact the FLO Student Helpdesk by e-mailing flo.student@flinders.edu.au, by telephoning 1800 200 292 (International callers +61 8 8201 5378), or by using an online form. Also be aware that the FLO system is serviced periodically, which could mean some 'downtime' of the system, prohibiting your access.

12. How do I learn more about FLO?

You can learn how to use FLO by accessing an online tutorial via Student Help on the FLO homepage. Just playing around on FLO will also give you more confidence.

13. How do I apply for credits?

Credit transfer is a process that allows students to seek recognition for prior studies. It is also known as exemption, status, recognition of prior learning and advanced standing. For more general information go to, <http://www.flinders.edu.au/future-students/credit/about-credit-transfer.cfm> Essentially you need to apply online for any credit transfer, using the wider university's forms and processes and this e-application will then make its way to us in the department and reviewed by relevant topic coordinators. Credit transfer can take some time so please get your paperwork organised earlier rather than later.

14. How do I get my study materials?

It is no longer the case that distance materials will be sent to your home, as many topics have study materials online. You will need to get your enrolment sorted out so you can then get your Flinders email account organised, which will then enable you to get your necessary username and password for FLO. Once you have access to FLO you can then open up topic outlines and other study materials. Most topic coordinators do not upload their material all in one hit, they tend to roll it out throughout the semester. You will be able to access the topics on FLO one week prior to the commencement of the semester (Semester 1 commences 4th March 2013, Semester 2 commences 29th July 2013).

Prescribed texts or readers must be purchased through Unibooks at Flinders, not through our department. You can order by phone or online using your credit card. Go to <http://www.unibooks.com.au> or phone +61 8125 5185.

15. What kind of help can I expect from the library?

The library offers support for your study needs, including helping you to database search, locate articles and so on. Go to <http://www.flinders.edu.au/library/>. However, for trouble shooting, you will need to first work in their online environment, using their 'common access problems and solutions', 'tutorials and how to' and Library FAQs. Go to <http://library.flinders.edu.au/help/>. Naomi Billingham is our library liaison person, naomi.billinghurst@flinders.edu.au. Please contact Naomi for library support.

16. How do I get a library card?

Student ID cards are issued at enrolment and are necessary for your library access. The student card is required to borrow books from the Library, obtain an academic transcript, obtain student concessions from businesses (including those on campus), and for attendance at student organised functions. Students who are unable to visit the Central Library during normal business hours may submit a postal application for a Flinders University Student ID and Library card. If you lose your student card notify Lending Services immediately. A replacement card can be obtained from Lending Services for a small fee. Phone +61 8 8201 5903.

17. Can I expect to do a field placement near to where I live?

Yes. However, if you live in a very remote place or there are no available field work agencies close to you, you may need to do some travel, or work with the field team to be placed at an agency where there is no qualified social worker to supervise you. In this instance you are likely to work with a 'task supervisor' and then have the equivalent of an hour a week supervision with an 'external supervisor' (someone with a social work qualification and more than 2 years post-qualifying experience).

18. Who do I talk to about field placements?

The members of the MSW team who coordinate field education are Andrew Paterson, Ilektra Zabaniyas and Janine Harrison. They can help you with all your field education requirements. For Field Education credit transfer applications, please contact sbscredit@flinders.edu.au.

19. Can I set up my own field placement?

No. You can certainly pass on your ideas, preferences and links to the field team but you are not permitted to make contact with agencies yourself to set up a placement. We have between 100 and 200 students on placement each semester and it would be unfair to inundate some with large numbers of student placement enquiries. For more details on field placements, contact swplacements@flinders.edu.au to help with your planning.

20. How do I apply for credit for a field placement?

For information about the documentation required for applying for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) email swplacements@flinders.edu.au.

21. If I need an extension, how do I apply for one?

Each topic coordinator puts out a Statement of Assessment Methods (SAMS) and in that document you will find the processes for extensions outlined. SAMS are uploaded on FLO just before the topics commence. Please know that contacting topic coordinators in advance to the deadlines is expected.

22. If I need to have a leave of absence, how do I apply for one?

If you have enrolled in a topic and wish to un-enrol from it you will have until March 31st (Semester 1) or August 31st (Semester 2) to do so without cost (both academically or in terms of tuition fees). These dates are called 'census dates'. If you require a longer, sustained break from your study, you will need to formally apply.

Students not returning to study in the current year, but wish to return in the following year, must apply for leave. Leave covers a one-year period and subsequent application is required to extend beyond one year. An application for leave is not required for one semester's leave only.

You can apply for leave by submitting an Enrolment Request via the Ask Trim <http://flinders.edu.au/asktrim> page. Log in, go to the 'Request Support' tab and lodge a request stating the reasons for your leave.

Enrolment Services will seek approval on your behalf and notify you via your University email account if your leave request is approved. Students who do not obtain leave will be required to apply for readmission to the course in order to return to study. Students eligible for Pre-2005 Student status who discontinue study without obtaining approval for leave of absence will be charged at the increased student contribution rates.

23. What are the financial implications of withdrawing from a topic?

You will still have to pay your tuition fees if you do not withdraw by census date (March 31st for semester 1 or August 31st for semester 2). Unfortunately, we in the department have no jurisdiction over these fees.

24. How might I connect up with other students?

Using FLO discussion boards while studying, sharing emails and personal phone numbers for informal and formal connections. Different topic coordinators approach this task differently, but aim to ensure that communication between and among students occurs.

25. From past distance students what issues or troubles might I expect?

Get organized. Don't wait at your letterbox for materials. Familiarise yourself with various websites, inside Flinders University and beyond. Get onto FLO for your materials in week 1 of the semester and develop a study schedule. Anticipate that there may be some initial wrinkles in the early stages of the topic and keep your cool. Don't forget the importance of email etiquette. Ask permission to contact students directly, out of class. Try to attend as many social work related events as you can so you can feel like you are part of the profession. Don't vanish from topics. If you need an extension for an assignment, talk to your topic coordinator.

26. Can I attend classes when I am enrolled as an External student?

When enrolling in topics, you must nominate your status as an external or internal student. External students may come to lectures when on campus; however tutorial attendance is only for students who have enrolled in that class unless otherwise indicated due to the fact that tutorials also provide opportunities for assessment. External students generally have this same opportunity through on-line discussions groups.

If you choose to enrol internally, you can change your study mode to external before the beginning of the semester. Although you can choose to take any topic as an Internal or External topic, you cannot change during the semester unless there are extraordinary circumstances such as illness.

27. What are the on campus offerings during the course of my program?

Many students from all around Australia have chosen in the past to come to Flinders for the intensive topics because it is enjoyable for them to do the topics face-to-face and to meet other students in their program before going home to complete the assessments. Those topics already scheduled as Intensives over a one week period during 2013 are listed on the website in connection with each topic. For those of you who will come to Adelaide for a week-long topic we approach local students to see if any of them would like to offer hospitality to an interstate student during the week. This exchange has been very successful.

We also offer a number of orientation activities and seminars and you will receive these announcements regardless of where you live. We do this to include you in the information about your Discipline and School.

We also have been developing an MSW website where meetings and minutes from the Student Consultative Committee (SCC) are posted and announcements or information for students. You will be given access to this website when you enrol in one or more topics.