

GEORGE WARREN

BROWN
SCHOOL

of Social Work

MASTER OF
SOCIAL WORK

Field Instructor Handbook

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Washington University in St. Louis

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Welcome to Field Education

Dear Colleague,

Welcome from the George Warren Brown School of Social Work Office of Field Education! Field instruction at Brown School is a required didactic component of the Master of Social Work (MSW) program and the responsibility of the Dean and the faculty who delegate the implementation of practicum policies to the Office of Field Education. This office reports directly to the Associate Dean for Social Work.

The purpose of your **Master of Social Work Field Instructor Handbook** is to provide you with information regarding the social work field education requirements, policies and procedures that have been established for practicum students and field instructors affiliated with Brown School. Please read and retain your handbook as a valuable reference and contact the Office of Field Education staff if assistance or support is needed.

Thank you for your partnering with Brown School to provide stellar field experiences to our students.

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Communications with the Office of Field Education

When situations arise that necessitate the need for consultation or sharing information, field instructors should initiate communication with the Office of Field Education. Timely communication is critical. Circumstances may include but are not limited to:

- Outstanding student performance in practicum
- Inquiries regarding policies and procedures
- Student behavioral issues or concerns in practicum
- Requests to terminate practicum
- Requests to terminate or suspend the practicum partnership
- Incident reporting
- Organizational changes (downsizing, restructuring, facility closing)
- Changes in contact information for the field instructor or organization

Missions and Policies of Brown School & Washington University

Mission of Washington University in St. Louis

Washington University's educational mission is the promotion of learning – learning by students and faculty. Teaching, or the transmission of knowledge, is central to our mission, as is research, or the creation of new knowledge. The faculty, composed of scholars, scientists, artists, and members of the learned professions, serves society by teaching; by adding to the store of human art, understanding, and wisdom; and by providing direct services, such as health care. Central to our mission are our goals, which are to foster excellence in our teaching, research, scholarship, and service; to prepare students with the attitudes, skills, and habits of lifelong learning and with leadership skills, enabling them to be useful members of a global society; and to be an exemplary institution in our home community of St. Louis, as well as in the nation and in the world.

Through our goals Washington University intends to judge itself by the most demanding standards; to attract people of great ability from all types of backgrounds; to encourage faculty and students to be bold, independent, and creative thinkers; and to provide the infrastructure to support teaching, research, scholarship, and service for the present and for future generations.

Vision & Mission of the George Warren Brown School of Social Work

Our Vision – To create positive social change through our path-breaking research and educational excellence.

Our Mission – To educate and prepare future social work and public health leaders in areas of policy, practice, and research; to pioneer research and apply results to impact policy and practice locally, nationally, and internationally; and to collaborate with organizations to use evidence to improve access to and quality of social services and to address social and economic justice.

Evidence-Based Social Work and Public Health Practice – The Brown School faculty believes that the increasing research base of our professions and the ongoing technological revolution in data management and communication make it possible to move beyond rhetoric about the need for an evidence base for our professions and to teach students about how to consciously and judiciously use evidence in collaborative social work and public health decision making. Professionals who practice from an evidence-based perspective must be able to apply the five steps and core elements of the Evidence-based Practice (EBP) process. Brown School's mnemonic "FLAIR" is used to remember these five steps:

- **F**ormulated an empirically relevant question answerable by data (e.g., "Why do members of X racial group often drop out of treatment?" or "What organizational factors have been shown to most directly influence client outcomes?")
- **L**ocated the Best Available Evidence
- **A**ssessed the quality of the evidence you found
- **I**ntegrated the best available evidence with professional judgment, client factors, and social context
- **R**eviewed how things went (e.g., Did you find the information needed? Did you implement a new plan? How did it go?)

The FLAIR process is an integral component of the Brown School curriculum and is incorporated horizontally and vertically throughout the social work and public health programs, including practicum.

Overview of the MSW Practicum

Practicum: Authentic Practice Experience

The practicum experience is an integral part of professional social work education. It is designed to provide authentic practice situations where theoretical knowledge and concepts from the classroom and literature can be applied to the concrete demands of the practicum. The learning that occurs in the practicum setting complements academic course work with practical application of theories, concepts and specific practice behaviors for the field experience – thus, the term "practicum."

Purpose of Practicum

The purpose of the graduate-level social work practicum at the Brown School is threefold: 1) to provide challenging, innovative and substantive learning experiences to students, 2) to prepare students to assume responsibilities as social work professionals exhibiting ethical and professional behavior, and 3) to ensure skilled supervision by experienced field instructors who have been affiliated with the Brown School based on demonstrated knowledge in the field.

Timing of Practicum

When the practicum is scheduled and whether it is to be completed on a part-time or full-time basis (up to 40 hours a week) are contingent upon each student's educational plan. MSW students must wait until their second semester of enrollment (when they have completed and/or are currently enrolled in all seven foundation courses) to begin practicum. Following the Brown School's academic sequencing for the MSW program, most students begin practicum in the second semester of their first year. However, practicum may be completed in the fall, spring, or summer semesters. Students entering the MSW program with advanced standing can begin their concentration level practicum their first semester of enrollment. Students with advanced standing interested in going out-of-state or abroad are eligible in their second semester of enrollment.

Selection of Practicum

The Office of Field Education does not assign students to practicum organizations. The School shares the responsibility for selecting field experiences with the individual student. This model allows each student to consider learning experiences that contribute to professional identity, provide a comprehensive base of theory, knowledge, and skills, and build on their own personal short and long-term career goals.

Required Credits and Practicum Hours

MSW students are required to complete a total of eight (8) academic credits in practicum, equivalent to 960 hours of field work, with a grade of PASS to graduate. The eight credits are divided into two practicum levels: three (3) credits for foundation practicum (360 work hours) and five (5) credits for concentration practicum (600 work hours) (see "Practicum Levels" section). Each credit of practicum is equivalent to 120 work hours in the field. Students may register from one (1) credit (120 work hours) to a maximum of five (5) credits (600 work hours) per semester. The breakdown of hours worked per week (part-time or full-time) is negotiated between the student and field instructor. However, students may not accumulate more than 40 work hours per week in practicum. Students may continue to volunteer or work at the practicum organization beyond the completion of the contracted practicum hours, as long as the duration and terms of continued service are agreeable to both the student and the organization.

Professional Behavior and Responsibilities of Students in Practicum

Consistent with the knowledge, values, ethics, and skills of the social work profession, students in practica are expected to adhere to the profession's values and ethics in all aspects of the field instruction experience. Responsibilities of students in practicum include:

- Arranging and maintaining a schedule for weekly field supervision
- Planning, attending, and actively participating in weekly supervisory sessions
- Preparing an agenda for supervision
- Keeping a timesheet of completed practicum hours
- Assuming responsibility for demonstrating all competencies and practice behaviors through learning activities
- Communicating with the field instructor regarding the student's learning needs and interests, conflicts regarding field instruction, and challenges to develop as a professional social work practitioner
- Participating in the mid-semester site visit
- Consulting with the organization about safety and liability
- Fulfilling all the obligations and expectations set forth in the student's Educational Learning Agreement
- Contacting the Office of Field Education if problems arise in the field that may need support, clarification, and resolution
- Submitting the Student Self-Evaluation of Competencies and Performance and Student Assessment of Practicum Experience at the end of the field experience

Additional student responsibilities are discussed in the "Practicum Requirements for Students" section and throughout this handbook.

What Field Instructors Need to Know Before the Start of Practicum

Field Instructor to Student Ratio

Field instructors may supervise no more than three (3) students in practicum per semester. This field instructor-student ratio (3:1) affords the field instructor the opportunity to effectively engage and supervise a manageable number of students at any given time, so as not to infringe upon the time and availability of the field instructor to provide quality supervision to all

students, and effectively attend to his or her own job duties. An exception to this policy may be made for professionals whose primary job is to supervise practicum students or volunteers.

Educational Learning Agreement (ELA)

The Educational Learning Agreement (ELA) is a learning contract that guides the student's progress towards gaining competency during the practicum experience. It is a formal document that focuses on Brown School's social work competencies and practice behaviors that have been adapted by the Office of Field Education to operationalize in the field. Completion and submission of the ELA to the Office of Field Education is the responsibility of the student in with consultation with and support of the field instructor (see "Practicum Requirements for Students" section).

Orientation for Students in Practicum

A successful practicum partnership between a field instructor and student begins with a well-planned orientation program. An effective orientation process can help a student quickly acclimate to their practicum setting, better understand their role in the organization, and clearly define their tasks, duties, and responsibilities in the practicum. The orientation of a student to their practicum organization and/or site should include:

- Adaptation to the culture and environment of the organization – tour of facility, student's office space, review of dress code, work schedule, holiday/vacation schedules, use of phone, travel reimbursement, resources manuals, and reference materials
- Agreement on the student's role in practicum, including boundaries of student's involvement in projects, meetings, or committees, persons with whom student may consult, and student's working title (e.g., research associate intern)
- Review of the history, mission, funding sources, services and organizational chart
- Review of organizational policies and procedures, including the organization's stance on confidentiality
- Review of the code of ethics followed by the organization or practicum site
- Review of organizational procedures for documentation, record keeping, and reporting work time
- Introduction to key administrators and staff in the organization
- Introduction to key community resources and persons outside of the practicum organization with whom the student is likely to interact
- Review of personal safety issues and training necessary to protect the well-being of the student.

Students who will be engaged in practicum tasks and duties off-site from the practicum organization (e.g., in community centers or health clinics) should also be oriented in a similar manner as indicated above to the culture, operations, and policies of the work site.

Mid-Semester Site Visit

All practicum students are required to receive a mid-semester site visit approximately midway through completion of practicum hours each semester they are in practicum. For practica at out-of-state or international locations, an e-mail, phone conference, or video conference may be arranged. The visit is scheduled by the student's academic advisor or a Brown School professional, who will conduct the site visitor for the semester. The field instructor, student, and site visitor will meet for approximately 45 minutes to an hour to discuss the student's progress in practicum; therefore the field instructor's participation in this meeting is vital (see "Mid-Semester Site Visit" in the "Practicum Requirements for Field Instructors" section).

Professional Liability Insurance

Washington University carries a \$2 million policy for its various professional fields. This program covers duly registered Brown School students for events that may occur while performing duties in their field practicum. Field instructors and organizations can obtain proof of coverage by contacting the Office of Field Education.

Automobile Insurance

The University does not provide automobile liability coverage to students. Students who will be using their personal vehicle or a company vehicle for organizational business should negotiate automobile coverage with the organization prior to the start of the practicum.

Special Accommodations

Students with disabilities or those requiring special accommodations in the field should discuss those needs with the field instructor and the Director of Field Education so that reasonable accommodations can be identified and planned for

accordingly. Reasonable accommodations are tools or arrangements that facilitate or enhance the performance of a student with a disability or special needs.

Criminal Background Checks, Drug Screenings, HIPAA Certification, and Verification of Health Status

Some practicum organizations may require screenings, certification, and verification or vaccinations from students prior to beginning practicum. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to the following: criminal background check, drug screening for illicit drugs, vaccinations, HIPAA training/certification, and/or verification of health status. Washington University does not require or facilitate such requirements of students. The field instructor should communicate directly with the student about these requirements and compliance with organizational standards and policies. Students are individually responsible for obtaining the required background checks, screenings, required trainings/certifications, and all associated costs and fees.

Students' Activities in Compliance with the NASW Code of Ethics

The Brown School supports the policies of affiliated practicum organizations. However, because practicum students are not employees of these organizations, students are encouraged to pay special attention to the requirements or their practicum tasks and duties in order to comply with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics.* The code of ethics provides values and beliefs which serve as the foundation for morally responsible, social work practice that should guide students in their professional behavior as agents of the organization while in practicum.

** Note: Dual degree MPH/MSW students must also comply with the public health "Principles of the Ethical Practice of Public Health" while in practicum. Copies of the "Principles of the Ethical Practice of Public Health" and the "NASW Code of Ethics" are available under the "Community Resource – Field Instructor Resources" menu on the Brown School website (gwbweb.wustl.edu).*

Organizational Policies

Students are required to comply with the rules and policies of the practicum site, insofar as they pertain to students' activities during practicum. It is the responsibility of the field instructor to ensure that students are well-apprised of the organization's policies, consequences should violations of such policies occur, and dress and professional comportment aligned with organizational policies. Field instructors should also discuss with the student the potential for conflicts of interest regarding the policies of the organization and principles/ethics of the social work profession, if applicable (see "Students' Activities in Compliance with the NASW Code of Ethics" section).

Lobbying Activities

Students who will be engaged in formal lobbying activities as a part of the practicum experience should discuss with the practicum organization and the Office of Field Education the issue of registering as a lobbyist with the appropriate governmental entity. If the field instructor and student determine that registration is appropriate, the student must register as a lobbyist with the practicum organization and not with the University. It is the responsibility of the organization and student to comply with all laws and regulations relevant to lobbying.

Sharing Sensitive Information

The Office of Field Education will share all practicum-related information, in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), with appropriate persons including the student's academic advisor, the practicum field instructor, and the Associate Dean for Social Work. Relevant information is defined as information that may have an impact on the student's learning experience, clients, constituents, the practicum organization, field instructor, or staff. Such information, as appropriate, will be shared to enhance the learning process. Field instructors are also expected to share relevant information with the Office of Field Education. The practicum organization may require the student to sign a release of information form for some types of information.

Mandated Reporting

Students are not legally required to be mandated reporters while in practicum; however, ethically students should report any suspected child or elder abuse to their field instructors and discuss possible reporting.

Safety and Security of Students in Practicum

The safety of students in practicum is a priority for the Office of Field Education, and if not addressed, concerns about personal safety can significantly impact learning opportunities in the field. While the University does not wish students to be protected from the realities of professional practice, immersing students in the realities of practice can also expose them to

safety and security risks.* The University and practicum organizations must partner to reduce risks to students in practicum. Therefore, field instructors and practicum organizations, when applicable should:

- Discuss safety and security matters with the student during the interview and throughout the practicum
- Relay information about the prevalence of or potential for violence while conducting practicum activities to the student
- Explain and enforce organizational safety protocols with the student, including building and office security, emergency procedures, management of violent clients and home visit safety procedures.
- Provide a tour of the surrounding neighborhood/community and address concerns the student may have regarding work in the community or area
- Allow the student to observe staff engaged in the work for which the student is preparing
- Allow the student to be observed while engaged in learning activities
- Provide the student with security resources (i.e., safety training and cellular phones) available from the practicum organization.

Examples of activities that warrant special concern and discussion with the student and the Office of Field Education prior to the start of practicum include, but are not limited to:

- Physical restraint of clients
- Transportation of clients in the student's private vehicle or company vehicle
- Transportation of a client with a history of violent behavior
- Practicum work when at times, the student will be alone or in volatile areas where other staff will not be present

In the event that a student is involved in an incident resulting in the risk of or experience of any personal threat or assault to themselves or others during the practicum, they must complete an Incident Reporting Form (see "Incident Reporting" section).

**Note: Students are expected to follow organizational policies, procedures, and protocols regarding the necessity of home visits, if applicable.*

Practicum Levels

Foundation Practicum

The foundation-level practicum is the first practicum experience students are required to complete. Students must complete three (3) practicum credits (360 practicum hours) at the foundation level. Selected organizations are affiliated as foundation practicum sites. Sites vary according to field of service and population served. **Foundation practica must have the capacity to provide students with the opportunity to experience a minimum of 50 hours of direct face-to-face client contact.**

Supervision of Foundation Practicum – Foundation practicum hours are to be completed in the Greater St. Louis area under the supervision of an affiliated and on-site MSW field instructor. A student must complete the foundation core courses and foundation practicum (i.e., 360 practicum hours with a grade of "PASS") in order to begin the concentration practicum.

Foundation Practicum Integrative Seminar – The Foundation Practicum Integrative Seminar, a one credit, 16-hour class, is taken concurrently with the first semester of the foundation practicum. The seminar integrates theoretical constructs and evidence-based practices with hands-on skill application and exposure to varied professional roles, values, and ethics of the social work profession. In the seminar, students utilize discussion, case presentations, group exercises, writing, and other assignments to process their field work experience in supervision and client interactions; debrief practice challenges in a supportive environment; and begin honing professional development skills through a peer-to-peer learning experience. The seminar strongly emphasizes generalist social work practice, with an emphasis on issues of diversity, social advocacy, social change, and social and economic justice.

Concentration Practicum

Students must complete five (5) practicum credits (600 practicum hours) of concentration practicum. Following successful completion of the foundation practicum (or upon the receipt of advanced standing for foundation practicum), the concentration practicum must be completed in one of the five concentration areas: Children, Youth and Families, Gerontology, Health, Mental Health, and Social and Economic Development. Concentration practicum hours may **not** be completed concurrently with foundation practicum hours. Students are not allowed to register for foundation and concentration practicum hours in the

same semester. The Office of Field Education does not recommend that students complete both foundation and concentration practicum at the same location. However, an exception to this policy may be made if specific conditions are met. Students must contact the Office of Field Education directly to request an exemption to this policy.

Supervision of Concentration Practicum – Concentration practicum hours can be completed in the Greater St. Louis area, out-of-state, or abroad (internationally) under the supervision of an affiliated and on-site MSW field instructor or an affiliated and on-site field instructor with a related master's degree.

Individualized Practicum – Those students who wish to have a learning focus different from the five established concentrations of study may develop and request approval of an individualized program of study from the Associate Dean of Social Work. This may be done by combining two or more concentrations or by focusing on a different population or social problem arena. For example:

1. Student interested in health and mental health – In this case, a student might choose an inpatient psychiatric setting for the practicum and select either a health or mental health focus for their general responsibilities.
2. Student interested in women's issues – In this case, a student might select a practicum in a women's shelter or areas of reproductive health and counseling with the focus on the theory, policies, ethics, services, etc., of women's issues.

Students individualizing their concentration area must use the practice behaviors identified and approved in their Individualized Program of Study Planning Form to develop the Individualized Concentration ELA.

Elective Practicum

An additional one (1) credit to five (5) credits of practica can be taken as elective courses, once concentration practicum requirements have been completed with a passing grade. One elective practicum credit equals 120 hours in the field and may be completed at the same practicum organization where the concentration practicum was completed or at a different field site.

Types of Practicum

One-Semester and Two-Semester Practica

In consultation with the field instructor, students may elect to complete practicum over a period of one semester or two semesters. In a one-semester practicum or in the first semester of a two-semester practicum, an approved copy of the Educational Learning Agreement should be provided to the field instructor by the student. Students are required to submit only **one** Educational Learning Agreement during their practicum experience at any one organization.

Practicum at Place of Employment

The Office of Field Education does not recommend that students complete practicum at their place of employment. An exemption from this policy may be requested by students through submission of the Petition to Complete Practicum at Place of Employment Form. Students approved to complete practicum at their place of employment must ensure that the following conditions are met:

- The organization and field instructor must be affiliated with the Brown School
- The field instructor cannot also be the student's day-to-day work supervisor
- The practicum must be in an entirely different program/department than the one in which the student is employed
- Practicum hours cannot be counted as work time, nor can work time be counted as practicum hours
- The student must be evaluated as a learner rather than as an employee
- The Educational Learning Agreement must attend to all competencies and practice behaviors as related to the practicum experience and not to the student's regular work tasks and duties

Out-of-State and International Practica

Upon approval from the Office of Field Education, students who have completed the foundation practicum with a passing grade can apply to complete concentration practicum outside of the Greater St. Louis area in any U.S. city or state, or outside of the U.S. in another country. Out-of-state or international organizations and professionals must meet the same criteria to affiliate as practicum organizations and field instructors that apply to local organizations and professionals. Students requesting to complete their practicum at an out-of-state or international location must submit the required documents, be

approved for the experience, and follow the Office of Field Education's policies and requirements for out-of-state and international practica.

Paid Practicum

A paid practicum may be offered at the discretion of the practicum organization. While it is appreciated when practicum organizations provide compensation to students in practicum, it is not a requirement for an organization to serve as a practicum site.* There is no minimum or maximum amount of compensation a student may receive. However, under no circumstances may the field instructor or practicum organization alter the agreed upon Educational Learning Agreement, contracted practicum hours, or practicum requirements as a condition of a compensated practicum without the approval of the Director of Field Education. In addition to the Practicum Timesheet required by the Office of Field Education, field instructors may require students to complete the organization's timesheet to track and verify practicum hours in compliance with the organization's protocols.

**Note: For the consideration of offering students compensation for practicum, please note that students do incur a financial expenditure for registering for practicum, as it is a course for which students must pay. Students completing out-of-state and international practica do incur additional travel and lodging expenses for which they are financially responsible, as Brown School does not provide stipends or financial support to students for practicum.*

Dual Degree MPH/MSW Practicum

Dual degree MPH/MSW students are required to complete three practica experiences: MSW foundation practicum (360 hours in the field for three credits), MPH practicum (360 hours in the field for three credits), and MSW concentration practicum (240 hours in the field for two credits), for a total of eight (8) practicum credits to graduate. The MSW foundation practicum must be completed prior to starting the MPH or MSW concentration practicum. The MPH and MSW concentration practica can be completed in succession or concurrently. Dual degree MPH/MSW students receive equivalent credit for three MSW concentration practicum credits when completing the MPH practicum. Thus the MPH practicum serves as a dual MPH/MSW practicum, which requires that the practicum organization and field instructor are affiliated for both MPH and MSW. Subsequently, dual degree MPH/MSW students must also develop and complete **two** Educational Learning Agreements (one for each program) when completing the MPH practicum requirement.

Practicum Requirements for Students

Mandatory Field Preparation Session

Prior to entering the field, each student is required to attend a mandatory field preparation session facilitated by the Office of Field Education. The mandatory preparation session is designed to help students prepare for field work. During the session, information on practicum selection, practicum requirements, procedures, and due dates for practicum-related documents.

Practicum Registration

Course Requirement – Practicum is a course requirement and students must register for the practicum course corresponding to the appropriate practicum level to receive credit for field work. Practicum may be completed in the fall, spring, and summer semesters each academic year.

Practicum Registration Form – In addition to registering for practicum as a course, students are required to complete and submit a Practicum Registration Form to the Office of Field Education no later than **two weeks prior** to the start of practicum or by the specified due date. A registration form is required every semester a student is in practicum and will be approved if both the organization and field instructor are currently affiliated. Notification will be sent via email to the student and field instructor regarding non-acceptance of the registration with an explanation for the rejection of the practicum. A student may not accumulate practicum hours with a non-affiliated organization or under the supervision of a non-affiliated field instructor.

Educational Learning Agreement (ELA)

The student must meet with the field instructor to develop an ELA. The ELA serves as a contract to guide and monitor the student's progress toward gaining professional social work competency during the field experience. To receive credit for practicum hours, the student must submit three signed copies of the ELA to the Office of Field Education for review and approval by the specified date or before completing 40 hours in practicum, whichever occurs first. Accumulation of practicum

hours may continue while the ELA is being reviewed. Students and field instructors will be notified if revisions are required and/or when the ELA is approved. No credit for hours completed during practicum is given if an ELA is not submitted and approved according to practicum guidelines. Specifics of the ELA are described in “Instructions and Overview of the ELA” in the “Practicum Requirements for Field Instructors” section.

Student Self-Evaluation of Competencies and Performance

Two weeks prior to the anticipated ending date of practicum, the student is required to complete the Student Self-Evaluation of Competencies and Performance (available online) and provide a copy to their field instructor for review each semester they are in practicum. Using a five-point scale, students must evaluate their practice based on the completion of each practice behavior and competency. Following is the five-point scale:

- 5 = Consistently exceeds expectations
- 4 = Exceeds expectations
- 3 = Meets expectations
- 2 = Progressing
- 1 = Failing to meet expectations (comments required)

Students must also provide specific examples of their practicum performance in various professional areas as indicated in the evaluation.

Student Self-Evaluation Worksheet – The Student Self-Evaluation Worksheet is a tool provided to students to help them prepare for the Student Self-Evaluation of Competencies and Performance. This worksheet is to be used by students throughout their practicum to track learning activities and summaries of each competency, and compile self-assessment summaries that will be required in the self-evaluation. Responses to the worksheet can be cut and pasted from this document directly to the Student Self-Evaluation of Competencies and Performance. This worksheet is optional for students, but strongly recommended. Field instructors may require students to use the worksheet throughout the practicum to review their tasks and progress in practicum in supervision meetings.

Practicum Timesheet

Throughout the practicum, students are expected to document all hours accumulated throughout the practicum. Completion of the Practicum Timesheet is governed by Brown School’s policies regarding Academic and Professional Integrity. The timesheet must be monitored by the field instructor, signed by the student and field instructor (after completion and review of the student’s self-evaluation and the field instructor’s evaluation) and submitted to the Office of Field Education at the completion of practicum hours each semester the student is in practicum. Students may not accumulate more than 40 hours per week in practicum.

Student Assessment of Practicum Experience

Students are required to thoughtfully and critically assess their practicum experiences by completing the Student Assessment of Practicum Experience survey at the end of every semester in practicum. Field instructors have requested this candid feedback to improve their effectiveness as mentors and to enhance the organization’s practicum experience for future students. Survey results are anonymously made available to Brown School students engaged in the practicum search process. Field instructors are also provided the results of the survey (a semester after students’ grades have been assigned) to use as feedback to evaluate, for example, their personal effectiveness as a supervisor/mentor, the organization as a learning environment, or enhancement of the practicum experience for future students.

Practicum Requirements for Field Instructors

The field instructor/student relationship is critical to the development of competent social work professionals. To that end, field instructors are provided the following resources and training.

Field Instructor Training

Field instructors are required to receive field instructor training from the Office of Field Education. There are two options for field instructor training, each discussed below. For clarification of which training is needed to supervise students, field instructors should contact the Office of Field Education.

On-line Tutorial – The on-line tutorial provides information and guidance for field instructors regarding effective techniques to manage supervision of practicum students, suggestions on how to enhance the practicum experience for both the practicum organization and student, and review of the requirements of the practicum. The tutorial takes no longer than one hour to complete and may be completed in sections over a period of time at the convenience of the field instructor. No continuing education credits or certification are offered for completing the tutorial.

Field Instructor Certification Program – The Field Instructor Certification Program is a six-session training program for local field instructors (in the St. Louis metropolitan area) who want to supervise MSW or dual degree MPH/MSW students in practicum. This program is facilitated by the field staff and directors from Brown School, Fontbonne University, St. Louis University, and University of Missouri-St. Louis. Each of the six sessions is offered at least once throughout the academic year and field instructors have a two-year time period to complete all six sessions. **A field instructor required to participate in the certification program must attend at least the first session of the training before they can begin supervising practicum students.** Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are offered for each of the six sessions and a certificate will be granted to field instructors upon successful completion of the program.

Training for Field Instructors of Dual Degree MPH/MSW Students – Local field instructors who want to supervise dual degree MPH/MSW students are required to attend the Field Instructor Certification Program.

Instructions and Overview of the ELA

The ELA (Educational Learning Agreement) is the learning contract developed by the student in consultation with the field instructor. Essentially, the ELA serves as the student's "job description" for practicum and should be used as a guide for developing and monitoring learning activities, goals, and objectives. A revised copy of the ELA or a written addendum specifying new tasks and duties for the student must be submitted to the Office of Field Education if substantive changes are made in the student's primary assignments. Details and instructions on completing the ELA are following.

ELA Face Sheet – The ELA Face Sheet serves as the cover page for the ELA and provides the student, field instructor, and Office of Field Education with specific information related to the practicum, contact information for the student and field instructor, the number of credits (corresponding to contracted work hours) to be completed, the number of semesters the student intends to be in practicum at the organization, and additional information helpful to the Office of Field Education. The bottom half of the Face Sheet provides a place for signatures, which are required. Once the ELA is completed and signed, the student is responsible for submitting three copies of the ELA to the Office of Field Education for final approval. Students and field instructors are notified via e-mail when the ELA is approved or if revisions are required.

ELA Part I: Field Experience Overview – The "Field Experience Overview" section is to be completed by the student in consultation with their field instructor. In this section, students are asked to provide a general description of the organization, including nature of work in which the organization is engaged, population served, general organizational structure, and the student's role in the practicum. Students must also summarize how they are oriented to the organization, including information on safety and security procedures. All responses should be in paragraph form.

In the "Summary of Primary Activities" section, students are asked to list the primary activities in which they will be engaged during the practicum. Students are encouraged to think about activities that allow them to engage in multiple levels of social work practice, including intake assessments, evaluations, case management, and community-level engagement, etc. This section is divided into the following categories:

1. Primary daily responsibilities (e.g., organizing community meetings, reviewing policy briefs, data analysis, grant writing, etc.)
2. Professional development opportunities (e.g., training sessions, seminars, in-services, etc.)
3. Brown School brown bags, workshops, or other professional development programs (students may receive credit for up to 16 hours of practicum work for attending such workshops; field instructors are encouraged to attend with students)
4. Long-term projects or products assigned (e.g., collecting/analyzing data for an evaluation project, preparing a grant, leading groups, etc.)
5. Administrative/clerical expectations (e.g., scheduling meetings, preparing presentation handouts, locking up facility, etc.)

Part I, "Supervision," is to be completed by the field instructor. It should detail the process and method of supervision the student can expect throughout the course of the practicum experience. In addition to indicating the day and time of weekly supervision, the field instructor is asked to address the following questions:

- How should the student prepare for the weekly supervision meeting (e.g., prepared agenda, samples of documentation, project summaries, journals, etc.)?
- Describe any process that will enhance or supplement supervision (e.g., observation, discussion, feedback, journaling, process recording, group supervision, etc.).
- Provide a brief narrative describing how student will be formally evaluated throughout the course of this practicum (e.g., successful completion of formal trainings, evaluations from presentations given, other staff feedback, quizzes, etc.).
- Will anyone else (e.g., task supervisor, program manager, trainer, etc.) provide the student with input regarding student's assignments and performance? If yes, how will student receive feedback from all involved persons? How will the field instructor incorporate this feedback in the student's final evaluation?
- What empirically supported practices will student use during the practicum (e.g., assessment tools, intervention models, literature review, practice guidelines, practice experience, professional training, research methods, systematic reviews, etc.)?

ELA Part II: Anticipated Learning Process – The Anticipated Learning Process section allows the student and field instructor to identify the anticipated learning process the student will experience to address each practice behavior (categorized in seven competency professional areas), and whether or not the practice behavior will be addressed in the first semester or second semester (if applicable) of the practicum. Each competency is listed in the ELA along with related practice behaviors.

FLAIR (Evidence-based Practice Process) – Students are required to document how FLAIR was operationalized at their practicum agency in the Student Self-Evaluation of Competencies and Performance at the end of the semester (as directed in ELA Part II). While students are trained on the FLAIR format, support from the field instructor may be needed for students to complete this assignment. To increase the understanding and use of evidence-based practice, FLAIR training is offered for field instructors throughout the academic school year (contact the Office of Field Education for more information). Following is a description of the FLAIR components students are required to address in practicum:

- Formulated an empirically relevant question answerable by data (e.g., “Why do members of X racial group often drop out of treatment?” or “What organizational factors have been shown to most directly influence client outcomes?”)
- Located the Best Available Evidence
- Assessed the quality of the evidence you found
- Integrated the best available evidence with professional judgment, client factors, and social context
- Reviewed how things went (e.g., Did you find the information needed? Did you implement a new plan? How did it go?)

ELAs for Dual Degree MPH/MSW Students – Dual degree MPH/MSW students are required to submit two ELAs: one for the MPH program and one for the MSW program. Field instructors should consult with dual degree MPH/MSW students to assist with construction of tasks, assignments, and duties relevant to each ELA.

Weekly Supervision

Field instructors are required to provide one hour of weekly, individualized supervision to each student in practicum. The weekly meeting should include an agenda of topics prepared by the student to discuss. Topics may include:

- Updates on the student's progress with tasks and projects
- Challenges/problems faced by the student
- Accomplishments/goals the student has achieved
- Issues of cultural competency and diversity (within the organization and with clients/constituents)
- Processing of the organizational culture
- Identification of training opportunities for the student
- Discussion and mentoring regarding the student's professional development and career goals
- Discussion of news and information impacting the social work field, and that is relevant to the organization's field of service, the student's tasks/projects, etc.

Group Supervision – Organizations hosting more than one practicum student or other interns may choose to offer group supervision to students as a **supplement** to (but not in lieu of) individual supervision. Group supervision may be used to orient a group of students to the organization, allow students the opportunity to meet other interns and coordinate student

projects, or provide a forum for guest speakers and professional development for students that enhance their practicum experience.

Task Supervisor – The Brown School differentiates between an affiliated field instructor and an organizational task supervisor. A task supervisor is often a staff member who assumes specific responsibilities for the student’s practicum learning as delegated and monitored by the field instructor. A task supervisor does not replace the field instructor nor can the task supervisor substitute for the field instructor in weekly supervision.* Therefore, the task supervisor is not expected to meet Brown School’s criteria for supervision and evaluation, but should be informed of Brown School’s practicum requirements and procedures. It is the responsibility of the field instructor to help the student integrate the task supervisor’s contribution into the overall learning experience.

**Note: The Office of Field Education recognizes that on occasion, a field instructor may be unavailable to meet with the student for weekly supervision (e.g., field instructor is on vacation or at an out-of-town conference/meeting). In these instances a task supervisor may meet with the student to monitor their progress and address any concerns or issues. However, this substitution is only acceptable for short-term situations. Field instructors who will be absent for supervision over an extended period of time must notify the Office of Field Education to discuss a plan for continuing supervision.*

Overview of Mid-Semester Site Visit

The student and field instructor begin facilitation of the scheduling of the site visit by suggesting a time for the visit on the Face Sheet of the Educational Learning Agreement. The site visit will occur approximately midway through the completion of practicum hours each semester the student is in practicum. The objectives of the site visit include:

- Ensuring weekly, well-organized supervision meetings are occurring
- Facilitating productive educational relationships between the student and field instructor
- Monitoring competencies through student activities, learning, and practice behaviors
- Monitoring and facilitating integration of course and field learning
- Identifying needs and curriculum development trends from a field perspective
- Implementing or evaluating a “Practicum Improvement Plan,” if applicable (see “Practicum Improvement Plan” in “Problems in the Field” section)
- Strengthening Brown School and community relationships

Field Instructor Evaluation of Practicum

After reviewing the student’s self-evaluation, the field instructor completes the Field Instructor Evaluation of Practicum, available online through a link and password that will be emailed to the field instructor, along with instructions on how to complete the evaluation. The field instructor will receive notification to complete their evaluation of the student **after** the student’s self-evaluation has been completed, reviewed, and approved by the Office of Field Education. In the evaluation, the field instructor evaluates the student’s performance of each practice behavior and each competency area using the five-point scale below. The field instructor also evaluates the student’s overall performance of the practicum experience, rates aspects of the student’s professionalism, and suggests a grade for the student. Field instructors should print their final evaluations for review with students. The field instructor’s signature on the Practicum Timesheet verifies that the field instructor has reviewed their evaluation with the student.

5 = Consistently exceeds expectations

4 = Exceeds expectations

3 = Meets expectations

2 = Progressing (below expectations; comments required in comments section)

1 = Failing to meet expectations (comments required in comments section)

NA = Choose only if competency or practice behavior has not been addressed (applicable ONLY in the first semester of a two-semester practicum)

Monitoring, Evaluations, and Practicum Grades

Mid-Semester Site Visit

The student’s academic advisor or a Brown School professional will monitor the student’s progress in the field and conduct a minimum of one on-site visit per semester, each semester the student is in practicum. As implied the “site visit” is to occur at

the organization (unless the practicum is at an out-of-state or international location, in which case a video or phone conference will be scheduled or an e-mail will be sent).

Evaluation

Evaluation is viewed as a continuous process occurring throughout the course of the practicum experience, a necessary aspect of public accountability and, hence, a necessary part of social work practice. The Student Self-Evaluation of Competencies and Performance is completed by the student and provided to the field instructor two weeks prior to the completion of practicum hours each semester a student is in practicum. Following the review of the student's self-evaluation during supervision, the field instructor must complete and submit online their evaluation of the students' performance using the Field Instructor Evaluation of Practicum. Both of these evaluations provide important feedback regarding the student's progress and professional aptitude in the practicum.

Practicum Grades

Practicum grades are based on the demonstration of professional competencies, through the application of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Upon review of the student's self-evaluation, the field instructor's evaluation and suggested grade, and the Practicum Timesheet, the Director of Field Education will assign a final practicum grade. Final practicum grades are PASS/FAIL.

Problems in the Field

There are occasions when problems arise during the practicum involving the student or that affect their practicum experience. It is crucial that any problems or concerns associated with a student's performance in the field, with a field instructor, or with the practicum organization are brought to the attention of the Office of Field Education as soon as they become apparent. Only in this way will the student and field instructor have full opportunity to initiate timely corrective steps to remedy a resolution, as described below.

Student Behavior

All Brown School students are expected to practice professionally, ethically, and morally during practicum. This expectation is expounded throughout the academic year in various trainings and coursework, and is mandated within the practice behaviors and professional competencies and the Education Learning Agreement. Yet, there may be times when a student's behavior (intentional or unintentional) impedes successful performance in the practicum or is detrimental to the mission and/or operations of the practicum organization. The following are examples of student behavioral issues in practicum:

- Excessive absenteeism or tardiness – excused or unexcused
- Failure to provide reasonable notice of an unscheduled absence from the practicum
- A single gross violation or repeated violations of the NASW Code of Ethics
- Gross or repeated violations of the organization's policies and/or procedures
- A sustained low level of performance that is unresponsive to corrective action
- Reporting to the practicum site under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Evidence of severe, personal behavior problems that impeded completion of work tasks or projects
- Maintaining, after it has been addressed, a hostile, negative attitude incompatible with the values of the profession of social work, manifested in behaviors towards clients, constituents, instructors, peers, organization staff, and/or University staff
- Failure to maintain professional boundaries and behaviors in respect to the organization's clients, constituents, and staff
- Any sexual or inappropriate relationship with a client, constituent, or staff member

When such behaviors occur, field instructors have several courses of action to remedy a solution to the situation:

Practicum Improvement Plan (PIP) – If alerted to problems related to student behavior early in the semester, the Office of Field Education may develop a "Practicum Improvement Plan" to assist the student with improving behavior. The improvement plan is completed by the field instructor and academic advisor, signed by the student, field instructor, or Brown School professional, and must contain the following information:

- Narrative of identified concern/behavior

- Description of previous attempts to address the concern, including educational feedback, increased supervision, changes in the Educational Learning Agreement, or other interventions
- Plan for resolution, including specified deadlines, clearly stated objectives for all involved parties (i.e., student, field instructor, task supervisor, etc.) and their subsequent responsibilities, and what measures of success will be utilized to determine if the improvement plan is successful

A copy of the plan must be provided to the student, the field instructor, and the Office of Field Education. The Director of Field Education must be kept informed of all problematic field-related instances involving the student and field instructor, and may become directly involved at any point in the process. If the student's performance remains unsatisfactory following the implementation of the PIP and it appears that a failing grade will be the resulting occurrence, communication and/or a meeting between the student, field instructor, advisor, and the Director of Field Education will be scheduled.

Student Termination from Practicum – If the objectives of a Practicum Improvement Plan (as summarized above) cannot be achieved and the student's behavior does not improve after consultation between the student, field instructor, and the Director of Field Education, a student may be terminated from practicum. The Office of Field Education will consult with the student and the field instructor regarding the specifics and requirements of the termination, and initiate the process. A student may also be removed or terminated from practicum for the following reasons:

- Failure to meet academic and behavioral standards of the policies and procedures of practicum (as outlined in the Office of Field Education "MSW Field Education Student Handbook")
- Failure to disclose critical background information on application forms or in pre-practicum and practicum interviews

Unanticipated Circumstances

Some problems that occur during practicum are due to changes beyond the student's or field instructor's control such as changes with the field instructor (e.g., field instructor leaves or is terminated), changes within the organization (e.g., internal restructuring or lose of funding), or changes with the student other than behavioral problems (student illness or death in the family). The field instructor or organizational representative is required to notify the Office of Field Education as soon as possible when circumstances necessitate change in supervision or if a practicum must be terminated. A student may also be removed from field due to:

- Decision of the Office of Field Education and/or recommendation of the site visitor that the organization is not meeting the outlined learning objectives of the Educational Learning Agreement
- The practicum organization or field instructor fails to demonstrate commitment to the Brown School field program requirements
- Failure of the field instructor in providing consistent supervision over the student's learning experiences and activities
- Student's personal safety is jeopardized by continuing in practicum

Change in Field Instructor – Whenever possible, the field instructor or organizational representative (in the event that the field instructor is no longer employed by the organization or otherwise incapacitated) is encouraged to explore all options that might allow the student to remain at the practicum site under different, pre-approved, supervision. If another professional from the organization is available to serve as field instructor, students may complete a Petition to Change Field Instructor Form with assistance of the current field instructor. The Office of Field Education will only approve a change in field instructor if the proposed field instructor is able to meet the requirements for affiliation. On a case-by-case basis, the Office of Field Education may work with the practicum organization to determine an alternative plan for supervision.

Student Requested Termination from Practicum – Students have the right to request that the practicum be terminated through the completion and submission of the Petition to Terminate Practicum Form which must be signed by the student, field instructor, and Office of Field Education. This form initiates a review of the practicum situation but does not automatically end a practicum experience until approval from the Office of Field Education is received. If the approval for termination is granted, the student may receive a grade for hours completed, if they are equal to at least one credit (120 work hours). For students accumulating less than 120 practicum hours, in most cases, credit for hours worked or an assignment of a grade will not be granted; and the student will be expected to complete all required hours in his or her next practicum.

Incident Reporting

Washington University is not in a position to take action against incidents involving students that occur off site, but the School will assist students in documenting any incidences in which a student is involved (see "Safety and Security of Students in Practicum" section). Students, field instructors, and/or advisors can use the Practicum Incident Reporting Form to document

the details of the incident and to assist in determining the action needed to be taken. The form is available for students through Brown School and available to field instructors under the “Community Resources – Field Instructors Resources” menu of Brown School’s website (gwbweb.wustl.edu). This form should be completed in addition to reporting documents required by the practicum organization, field site, Washington University, Brown School, or other investigating officials, and in no way substitutes for the forms, policies, or procedures that are required by any parties affected by or responding to the incident. Completed forms should be returned to the Office of Field Education.

Criteria for Continuation of Affiliation Partnerships

Affiliation partnerships between Brown School, field instructors and organizations are the hallmark of successful practicum experiences for our students. To ensure the synergism of the partnership is supported, the Office of Field Education requires field instructors and practicum organization to continue to meet the criteria of the affiliation as outlined in the affiliation application process and below. Partnerships of affiliation are granted for a period of three years and must be renewed every three years. However, the Office of Field Education, the field instructor, or the organization may request to terminate or suspend an affiliation partnership at any time. Such requests should be made in writing.

Criteria for Continuation as an Affiliated Practicum Organization

- Currently employ an affiliated field instructor
- Commitment in philosophy, policies, values, ethics, and practice of the social work profession and services (and the public health profession and services for dual MPH/MSW sites)
- Ability to provide graduate level learning opportunities that are consistent with the student's educational development and the organization's social work mission and services
- Competent staff (including at least one affiliated field instructor) sufficient to maintain program services without relying on students
- The ability to provide the resources necessary for students to carry out assignments, (e.g. telephone, desk, computer, administrative support, etc.)
- Willingness to invest necessary resources in student learning, including adequate release time for field instructors to attend School-sponsored meetings and to supervise students (defined as sufficient time for adequate review of the student assignments and learning goals; the requirement is at least one hour of individual supervision per student per week).
- Commitment to social work education, ability to provide quality learning opportunities for students as measured by quality and scope of assignments, diversity of clients/partners, service to underserved populations, and other appropriate criteria
- Clear differentiation between the student’s role as employee and the student’s role as a graduate-level learner if student is employed at site
- Organization must have existed for a minimum of one year and have received an affiliation site visit by an Office of Field Education staff member, when feasible

Criteria for Continuation as an Affiliated Field Instructor

- Demonstrated competence in supervision
- Provision of one hour per week (per student) regularly scheduled supervision meetings
- Provision of graduate-level practice experiences in keeping with individual student needs/abilities
- Demonstrated commitment to the construction of the Educational Learning Agreement
- Willingness to share expertise, time, and professional experiences with student(s)
- Willingness to meet with student(s) informally via unscheduled conferences and meetings (as needed)
- Participation in site visit each semester that a student is in practicum
- A pattern of positive interactions with students, advisors, and Office of Field Education staff
- Timely and appropriate communications with the Office of Field Education as needed
- Timely submission of evaluations and other practicum documents
- Submission of updated Field Instructor Application as requested periodically by the Office of Field Education
- Continued employment in “good standing” with the practicum organization
- Demonstrated professionalism in conduct and character

Field Instructor Benefits

As a show of appreciation to field instructors supervising practicum students, the following benefits are granted by Brown School and Washington University. Field instructors should contact the Office of Field Education directly about these benefits for more information:

- Nexus, The Practicum Newsletter – Office of Field Education newsletter with information about Brown School educational and research efforts, faculty or staff news, events, professional development trainings, and other matters of field-related interest
- Continuing Education Units (CEUs) – Three CEUs are granted each academic year to active field instructors
- Continuing Education and Professional Development Events – Access to the Professional Development Series and other workshops, trainings, colloquia, and institutes provided by the Brown School
- Tuition Remissions – A limited number of tuition remissions for courses at the Brown School
- Libraries – Access to the Brown School Social Work Library and Olin Library on the Danforth Campus
- On-line Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) Resource Area