

Steps to Follow When Pursuing Field Experience (Practicum and Internship)

Practicum:

1. **Begin your search for a site 3-8 months previous** to the beginning of the Practicum term. The earlier you begin your search, the more selection you will have. In searching for a practicum and or internship site, you are up against approximately 750 counseling and social work students in the St. Louis region all of whom are attempting to land an internship at the same time as you. The better sites, e.g., those with a strong training experience, typically hire their interns (and practicum students) six months in advance of need.
 2. **Initial meetings with a potential site are interviews.** Be prepared by understanding the contents of the *Professional Agreement* (see next item); and ask relevant questions related to course requirements, i.e., can you tape sessions, is your supervisor an LPC.
 - For Practicum, ensure the site supervisor understands that you will need to complete **40 direct** client hours in two 9-week terms. Direct hours are defined as counseling face to face with individuals and groups. The following are requirements for your Practicum that you will want to discuss during your interview with potential sites.
 - The site supervisor (or licensed counselor designee) has to be onsite while you are seeing clients;
 - The site has to provide the opportunity to tape (audio or video) 2-4 client sessions per term;
 - The site has to provide a minimum of 5 client hours (that's 5 hours per week counseling clients face to face) per week during practicum and 8 client hours per week of Internship; .
 - Group work and intake activities cannot make up more than 50% of total direct hours;
 - The individual providing your weekly supervision has to be an LPC or licensed psychologist with experience in clinical supervision; we prefer LPCs as you will get some of your developing professional identity from your supervisor;
 - You may not begin counseling or observing counseling with clients until the week that your Practicum or Internship class has begun.
 - For Internship, ensure the site supervisor understands that you will need to complete 60 direct hours (8-10 hrs per week) in one 9 week term.
 - Facilitation of groups AND intake activities cannot make up more than **50%** of your experience.
 3. **Download a copy** of the *Professional Practicum Agreement* from <http://www.webster.edu/depts/artsci/CounselingProject/counselingdocuments.htm>
 - **Review this document prior** to arranging interviews with sites so you are familiar with its contents and can explain contents to the site.
 4. **Previous to accepting a practicum** with a site, **contact the practicum instructor** for the terms you will enroll in practicum.
 - Inform the instructor of the site, the counseling responsibilities that will be provided during the experience, and the title of the supervisor's license. The instructor will determine if the site is an appropriate fit and experience for your practicum.
- If the practicum instructor assesses the site to be appropriate:**
- Get a **copy of the site supervisors license** (LPC, LP, MD)
 - Have the site supervisor **sign Appendix D** of the *Professional Agreement*
 - **Retain professional liability insurance** through HPSO (ACA , <http://www.counseling.org>) or another insurance agency. HPSO provides the most adequate and affordable (approx. \$29 per yr) professional liability insurance for a student.
 - Begin this process at least 2 weeks prior to class beginning.
 - The instructor will notify you to **contact the Counseling** Department Associate/Representative to assist you in registering for the course.

If the instructor assesses the site to be inappropriate, begin again with your search for an appropriate site.

5. **Bring the following to the first night of class** if you have not already provided it to the practicum instructor:
- *Appendices B and C*, signed by you
 - *Appendix D*, signed by your site supervisor
 - A copy of your professional liability insurance policy face sheet
 - A copy of your site supervisors professional license

Internship

If you remain at your practicum site for your internship:

****Ensure you have completed Group Techniques and Theories prior to Internship (or see your faculty advisor)**

1. **Contact the Internship instructor** for the term you will take Internship
 - Inform the instructor of the name of the site, the counseling responsibilities that will be provided during the experience, the title of the supervisor's license. The instructor will determine if the site is an appropriate fit and experience for your internship.

If the instructor assesses the site to be appropriate, the instructor will receive your file from the Practicum Instructor; and **the instructor will request** Debi Aholt, Department Associate, to assist you with registering for the course.

1. **Ensure your professional liability insurance** is adequate/up to date and will cover you through the end of your practicum.
2. **Download a copy** of the *Professional Internship Agreement* from <http://www.webster.edu/depts/artsci/CounselingProject/counselingdocuments.htm>
 - **Review this document prior** to arranging interviews with sites so you are familiar with its contents and can explain its contents to the site supervisor.
 - **Provide *Appendix D** from the *Professional Internship Agreement* to the Internship Instructor/Faculty supervisor in order to enroll

If you change sites between the Practicum and Internship OR If the Internship instructor assesses the site to be inappropriate, begin searching for a site as in steps 1-6 in Steps to Follow when Pursuing a Practicum.

***The Professional Internship Agreement has to be completed to begin** the internship even when the practicum and internship are being completed at the same organization. **It is the intern's responsibility** to ensure the site supervisor is familiar with the terms of the *Agreement*, i.e., to have reviewed the *Agreement* with the site supervisor; and to ensure the site supervisor understands the 600 hour requirement for the course, **240 of which** are required to be direct/face to face with clients.

Note: **A portion (minimum 10 hrs) of the 240 direct internship hours are required to be in group facilitation.** However, the total direct hours cannot include more than 30% (80 total hours of the 240 total hours) of group facilitation hours.

Considerations for Practicum and Internship (Field Experience):

- Practicum and Internship make up the totality of your field experience. Hence, the phrase “field experience” refers to your practicum and your internship.
 - Practicum is considered a beginning clinical experience whereas Internship is defined as a comprehensive counseling experience.
- Begin your search 3-6 months in advance of starting.
- It is preferable to locate a site where you can complete both your practicum and internship as the more hours you have to provide, the more you have to offer the site.
- Full time internships (3 cr hrs per term, 120 direct hours per term 15 direct hours per week) are *strongly discouraged* for the following reasons:
 1. Unless you are highly skilled and do not work—at all—completing a full time internship is not conducive to the process of formation.
 2. Most sites will not accept an intern for only two terms—they are looking for more of a commitment considering the time they will give you.
 3. Most sites cannot provide full time hours to a student, ie, a full time internship will require approximately 18 direct hours per week and 38 total hours per week.
 4. Students pursuing a full time internship will be held to double the course requirements (writing projects, tape presentations, etc) and twice the clinical hours. Hence, you will complete double the course work in addition to double the hours.

Social workers are not allowed by MO law to supervise counselors pursuing internship or licensure due to the fact that their education and training do not include pedagogy in education and supervision of clinical counseling.

Social work settings are not acceptable as counseling field experiences. If you need assistance determining if the site you are considering is a social work setting, contact your field experience instructor.

Attempt to locate a site that works with the population with which you would like to work. Many internships have the potential to turn into job offers at graduation or a later date.

Grades of **Incomplete are no longer allowed** in Practicum or Internship. You must complete the number of hours you registered for or register for the practicum or internship again (and pay) in order to complete the hours.

A few notes about remediation. Remediation is not atypical in field experience. If a student has ongoing personal or professional concerns, an inability to be open to supervision, poor interpersonal skills, poor counseling skills, and or poor coordination of time, it will surface in the field experience. Students not adhering to course requirements and or ACA *Code of Ethics* will be referred to the Counseling Advisory Committee for remediation. Remediation is a plan of action for your success which may include dismissal from the program/field in extreme cases. Cooperation with the Committee and compliance with their resulting requirements will be critical to your success and completion of the program. Completion of courses prior to field experience is not a guarantee of completion of degree. Counseling faculty are bound by ethical code (ACA, 2005) to “not graduate those students who are not a fit with the profession.”

Understand that there is an inherent subjectivity in the grading of your skills in field experience and most counseling courses. The ACA ethical *Code* and standards require faculty to use their professional judgment when grading and working with students.

Become familiar with the *ACA Code of Ethics* (2005) prior to beginning your field experience.