

University of Arkansas School of Social Work  
BSW Practicum Education Handbook  
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## **I. PRACTICUM EDUCATION PROGRAM MISSION AND OBJECTIVES**

### **School of Social Work Mission and Objectives**

#### **School of Social Work Mission:**

We are dedicated to fostering a community of culturally competent social work leader-practitioners. Through student-centered experiential learning, rigorous research, and committed community engagement, we prepare our students to become advocates for social and economic justice and equity. Our program integrates classroom knowledge with real-world applications, embracing a Multi-Systems Life Course Perspective. We aim to empower social workers who will enhance the quality of life for all individuals, families, and communities both within Arkansas and globally, believing that through our efforts, Arkansas can truly be a land of opportunity for all.

#### **BSW Program Mission:**

The mission of the BSW Program is to prepare culturally competent social workers who embody core social work values. Our program develops generalist leader-practitioners prepared for empirically based and multi-system practice through the integration of classroom, Practicum education, and experiential learning. Learning takes place within an intentional collaborative community that promotes inclusion to improve the quality of life for vulnerable people, families, groups, organizations and communities in Arkansas and globally.

#### **BSW Practicum Program Objectives:**

1. The ability to apply the knowledge and skills of ethical and competent social work practice with systems of all sizes focusing on assets, resiliency, and consumer-direct interventions.
2. The ability to practice without discrimination and with respect, knowledge, and skills.
3. An understanding and application of the value base of the profession and ethical standards and principles.
4. The application of critical thinking skills within the context of professional social work practice.
5. Use of communication skills differentially across client populations, colleagues, professional disciplines, and communities.
6. Knowledge of traditional and alternative theoretical frameworks supported by empirical evidence to understand individual development and behavior across the life course and the interactions among individuals and between individuals and families, groups, organizations, communities, and global systems.
7. The ability to analyze policy.
8. The ability to evaluate research studies, apply research findings to practice, and evaluate their own practice interventions and communicate findings.
9. The ability to understand and interpret the history of the social work profession and its contemporary structures and issues.
10. The ability to plan for and implement appropriate life-long professional development activities to incorporate new knowledge and skills in practice.
11. The ability to use supervision and consultation that is appropriate to social work practice.
12. The capacity to function within the structure of organizations and service delivery systems

and seek necessary organizational change.

13. The ability to use technology effectively and appropriately to achieve the purposes of social work.

### **Practicum Education Objectives**

The practicum curriculum is designed to allow students to demonstrate the accomplishment of foundational practice skills, knowledge, and values consistent with the mission, goals, and objectives of social work and the BSW program, through effective performance in practicum internship. Special expectations include demonstration of leadership skills and ability for independent practice, preparation for intervention with global issues, use of current technology for practice, and successful interdisciplinary collaboration.

The educational objectives of the practicum sequence are consistent with the program's overall education objectives. Upon successful completion of all courses in the practicum sequence, students must demonstrate accomplishment of each BSW Program educational objective.

Social Work Competencies are measurable practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, and skills (CSWE EPAS, 2022). Practicum education is considered the primary means for socializing students to the profession of social work. As such, all competencies considered essential for a social worker are considered by each student in practicum. As such, unlike other courses, all competencies are primary.

#### **Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behaviors**

Social work students demonstrate ethical and professional behavior by applying the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws, regulations, and ethical decision-making frameworks across practice settings. Students engage in self-reflection, maintain professional conduct and communication, use technology ethically and appropriately, seek supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment, and pursue ongoing professional development to support effective practice with diverse populations and systems.

#### **Competency 2: Advance Human Rights and Justice**

Social work students recognize that all individuals are entitled to basic human rights and understand the importance of promoting fairness, access, and well-being across systems. They apply this understanding by advocating for equitable access to resources and opportunities and engaging in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental well-being for individuals and communities.

#### **Competency 3: Culturally Responsive Practice**

Social work students understand how differing identities and intersectionality shape human experiences and development. They recognize that individuals and communities are influenced by a range of social, cultural, and environmental factors that may affect access to opportunities and resources. Social work students engage clients and constituencies as experts in their own lives and apply cultural humility through self-awareness and self-reflection, recognizing how

personal values, experiences, and perspectives may influence practice across individual, group, and community systems.

**Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice**

Social work students understand and apply quantitative and qualitative research methods to inform practice and evaluate outcomes. They use critical thinking to interpret and integrate research evidence, practice wisdom, and the experiences of clients and communities to improve practice, policy, and service.

**Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice**

Social work students understand how social policies affect well-being, service delivery, and access to resources at all levels of practice. They analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that improve outcomes for individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

**Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

*Focuses on building and maintaining the helping relationship; activities emphasize interaction, communication, and self-awareness in practice settings.*

Social work students value the importance of human relationships and use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to build effective, collaborative relationships with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. They apply theories of human behavior and person-in-environment to facilitate meaningful engagement and remain aware of how personal values and experiences may influence the engagement process.

**Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

*Focuses on gathering, organizing, and interpreting information to understand client and system needs, strengths, and context.*

Social work students use critical thinking and theories of human behavior and person-in-environment to assess the strengths, needs, and challenges of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. They collaborate with clients and professionals to develop goals and inform intervention planning based on assessment and research.

**Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

*Focuses on applying strategies and actions designed to support change at the individual, family, group, or systems level.*

Social work students apply evidence-informed interventions and theories of human behavior and person-in-environment to support individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities in achieving their goals. They collaborate across disciplines, engage in advocacy, and manage transitions to promote positive and sustainable outcomes.

**Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

*Focuses on examining outcomes and processes using data and evidence to determine effectiveness and improve practice, programs, and services.*

Social work students use qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate interventions and programs and assess outcomes. They apply theoretical knowledge and critical thinking to interpret evaluation data and use findings to improve practice, policy, and service delivery across systems.

## **II. PRACTICUM EDUCATION PROGRAM STRUCTURE**

### **Practicum Education Program**

The Practicum Education Program consists of faculty and staff committed to providing students with the opportunity to demonstrate practice skills, knowledge, and values consistent with the mission, goals and objectives of the BSW program through effective skill development in practicum internships.

The following is a glossary of terminology related to practicum education, followed by expanded descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of all partners.

### **PRACTICUM GLOSSARY**

***Practicum Education Program Director:*** The Practicum Education Program Director provides overall management of the Practicum Education Program. The Practicum Education Program Director assesses student readiness for practicum and collaborates with the student to determine the best placement based on student skills and interests as well as agency resources and availability.

***Practicum Liaison:*** The Practicum Liaison is the faculty member whose primary responsibility is to see that the student's internship experiences are educational and meet the established learning objectives. This is achieved by integrating curriculum content in practicum seminar, monitoring educational opportunities offered by the agency, connecting CSWE competencies and skill development, and evaluating the student's progress.

***Practicum Instructor:*** The Practicum Instructor is a social worker that has received a BSW or MSW degree from a CSWE- accredited program. The Practicum Instructor provides a minimum of one hour of supervision per week. In most cases, the Practicum Instructor will be on site at the assigned practicum placement; however, when a social worker is not available at placement, this role will be filled by a bachelor's or master's level social worker who is not on staff at the agency, and who has been approved by the Practicum Education Program.

***Task Supervisor:*** The Task Supervisor is the on-site supervisor that assigns tasks to the student and assists in evaluating the daily performance of the student. The Task Supervisor maintains regular contact with the Practicum Instructor and Practicum Liaison regarding the student's progress in practicum placement.

***Practicum Placement/Internship:*** The practicum placement or internship is a part of the social work student's formal educational requirements, consisting of an ongoing work assignment at an organization which allows the student to apply social work theory, values, ethics, and competencies to practice. This work assignment is directly supervised by a Practicum Instructor and/or Task Supervisor.

***Practicum Seminar:*** Practicum Seminar is the academic component of the social work student's practicum experience. In addition to working in an agency setting, the student is required to attend a weekly, two-hour seminar designed to integrate curriculum content with direct practice.

### **Criteria For Admission into Practicum Education**

The Practicum Education Program admits only students who have been admitted to the BSW core curriculum and completed the prerequisite social work and non-social work courses. BSW students must have successfully completed or currently enrolled in Practice II and Practice III to enroll in the practicum sequence. Once a student fulfills the requirements for entry into the BSW Practicum Education Program, they complete the Practicum Internship Application. Students submit their application during the semester before practicum internship placement. The Director of Practicum Education conducts an advising conference with each student before each student's referral for an interview. This interview includes an assessment of readiness for the practicum, which considers the student's developmental needs, as well as their interests, before selecting an internship placement referral.

### **Student Internship Placement Policy:**

The policy of the BSW Practicum Education Program is to ensure quality practicum placements for BSW students through placement and monitoring, utilizing an individualized approach and multi-pronged system to support students in experiential learning opportunities across the micro, mezzo, and macro systems at the generalist level of practice.

*The following procedures are utilized to support this policy for placement of BSW students:*

- a. Students will purchase access to Tevera (Experiential Learning Cloud), the online internship tracking system.
- b. Students will complete the BSW Practicum Internship Application **prior** to attending their Practicum advising appointment. This includes identifying areas of interest.
- c. **Students are prohibited from arranging their own placements, and unsanctioned contact with approved practicum organizations could result in a student's removal from the placement process, making them ineligible for practicum for that semester.**
- d. If a student has 2 or more Student Retention and Success Level 1 Forms that have been submitted, the student will be required to meet with Practicum Education Program Director and the BSW Program Director, to determine practicum readiness.

- e. Students will schedule an appointment with the Practicum Education Program Director when the advising calendar is sent out via e-mail. Students should arrive at their Practicum Advising appointment prepared to discuss areas of interest as well as learning and professional goals.
- f. Students will receive an e-mail with a referral for an interview for possible placement. Pertinent contact information for the interview will be provided in the e-mail.
- g. The Practicum Education Director will make every effort to place students within 50 miles of the University of Arkansas main campus in Fayetteville. Reasonable efforts will also be made to place students in the locale of their residence if they reside more than 50 miles from campus. However, the student is still required to attend the Practicum Seminar in person, once a week.
- h. Students will craft a professionally written e-mail to request an interview with the designated placement.
- i. If accepted for placement, students will complete the **Practicum Internship Acceptance Form**, which will be provided in the referral email. Please return the signed form to the Practicum Education Program Director.
- j. Students should arrange their schedule so that they can attend their internship for full days if feasible, attending internship **no less than four hours at a time**.
- k. If a student is deemed practicum ready, the Practicum Education Program may make no more than three referrals for placement interviews per semester. After each denial for placement, the student will be reassessed for internship readiness. If a student is unable to secure placement after three referrals for interview, they will be deemed inappropriate for practicum placement for that semester.**

### **Internship Readiness Policy**

Students are expected to demonstrate the academic, professional, ethical, and interpersonal readiness necessary to begin practicum.

If concerns arise regarding a student's readiness prior to practicum placement, the Practicum Education Director may initiate a practicum readiness review in consultation with the Practicum Education Committee. Based on the review, the Practicum Education Committee may recommend that the student proceed with practicum or refer the student to the Student Retention and Success Committee.

Concerns involving significant professional behavior, ethical conduct, or other issues affecting a student's continuation in the program may also be referred directly to the Student Retention and Success Committee through the Level III review process.

### **Workplace Internship Policy**

Students who wish to explore the possibility of using their place of employment as an internship site may submit a completed Workplace Internship Request in writing to the Practicum Education Director. Requests are decided on a **case-by-case basis** by the Practicum Education Director in consultation with the Practicum Education Committee. Requests could be required to include the following, based on the situation:

#### **STUDENT**

- a. A **clear delineation** between prior work duties and new internship responsibilities. Duties and responsibilities must be significantly different from those routinely done in the student's role as an employee with the agency. The volume of responsibilities also must be reduced to reflect the internship as a learning experience rather than an ordinary workload.
- b. Supervisors' names and titles for employment and the proposed internship. These **supervisors should not be the same person.**
- c. Provision of a **Practicum Instructor** with a minimum of a bachelor's degree in social work from a CSWE accredited program, **who has not supervised the intern in other employment responsibilities.**
- d. Identify the employment department and the proposed internship department. If these departments are in separate locations, please identify them.
- e. The schedule of **hours for the internship clearly delineated and separated from work hours**, signed by both the employment supervisor and the proposed Practicum Instructor.
- f. Payment: If the agency is going to provide payment for the internship, it must be a stipend or **payment outside of payment for regular employment responsibilities.**

#### **AGENCY**

- a. Written approval from an agency administrator agreeing to proposed internship, as well as present employment supervisor, and proposed Practicum Instructor.
- b. Written documentation that internship time will be focused on learning activities, not employment duties.

Students are generally discouraged from working part-time or "PRN" for the same agency at which they are interning. If the student seeks to do so during non-internship hours, a written **proposal must be submitted to the Practicum Education Director** as detailed in the Workplace Internship policy.

### **Students Transporting Agency Clients Policy**

The School of Social Work Practicum Education Program prohibits students from transporting clients in a **personal** vehicle while completing their practicum.

Students may be permitted to transport clients in an **agency vehicle** only under one of the following circumstances:

- The student is employed by the agency where they are completing their practicum, and transporting clients is an essential function of their regular employment position in accordance with agency policy.
- Client transportation is an essential responsibility of the practicum experience, and the agency demonstrates that transporting clients is necessary for the student to achieve the required learning objectives and fulfill the core responsibilities of the placement.

In either circumstance, **prior written approval** from the Practicum Education Director is required before the student may transport clients.

## **POLICY FOR CREATING NEW PRACTICUM PLACEMENTS**

The policy of the BSW Practicum Education Program is to ensure quality practicum placements for students that provide a multitude of experiential learning opportunities across the micro, mezzo, and macro systems at the generalist level of practice.

The following procedures are utilized to support this policy:

- a. Agency personnel who are interested in becoming a new internship site are encouraged to contact the Practicum Education Director to determine if the agency will be able to accommodate the learning opportunities required for social work students. If so, the agency must complete the Practicum Organization Application and Practicum Instructor Application.
- b. The Practicum Education Director will arrange a visit to or meeting with the proposed internship site.
- c. Following the visit, the Practicum Education Director, in consultation with the Practicum Education Committee, will determine if the agency is approved.

## **Practicum Instructor Requirements**

Practicum Instructors for BSW students must hold a bachelor's degree in social work from a CSWE accredited program. For cases in which the agency offers valuable learning experience and does not have a social worker with a CSWE-accredited bachelor's social work degree, the school ensures that the placement is consistent with the philosophy and practice of social work by arranging alternate social work supervision. This may be accomplished in several ways:

- a. A School of Social Work faculty member may be assigned to provide social work supervision for the student while the task supervisor provides onsite supervision of activities. In these cases, the faculty member is expected to meet with the student for a minimum of one hour per week.
- b. The organization/agency or the School of Social Work, depending on resource allocation, may designate a social worker that holds a master's degree from a CSWE-accredited

program to provide off-site supervision. In this case, a task supervisor is assigned to direct student activities on site at placement.

- c. An agency social worker with a bachelor's degree from a CSWE-accredited social work program that is not the primary Practicum Instructor may provide weekly social work supervision to ensure that the student understands their work from a social work perspective.
- d. A professional with a related degree and relevant qualifications may be approved to serve as the Practicum Instructor on a case-by-case basis.

### **Criteria for Selection of Practicum Education Sites**

The selection of agencies as practicum settings is based on the agency's commitment to shared responsibility for professional graduate education and the level of staff expertise and experience. To help ensure successful placements and high-quality learning experiences for the student, the School of Social Work carefully assesses all potential placement settings. Specific criteria for selecting graduate Practicum placement agencies include the following:

1. The presence of a solid commitment by the administrator and/or staff to provide professional educational learning opportunities in cooperation with the School of Social Work.
2. Willingness to designate a Practicum Instructor who (a) is a bachelor's level social worker holding a degree from a CSWE-accredited program, and (b) whose schedule will allow for development of student learning opportunities of appropriate depth, breadth, and variety; and attendance at any meetings or training required by the Practicum Education Program.
3. The agency performs functions within the scope of what is generally recognized as professional social work. If social work is not the principal function of the agency, social work is identified as a sufficient professional service offered by the agency, and the social work practitioners are accepted by the agency as professional staff.
4. The willingness of participating personnel to provide students with educationally guided professional social work experience.
5. The availability of staff willing and able to devote time to the additional assignment of a student along with their normal workload.
6. The presence of staff expertise in the form of professional education, experience, or other credentials which assure knowledgeable Practicum supervision.
7. Willingness to make efforts to help all students feel welcome.
8. Willingness to allow students to actively participate in the overall agency program and activities, as appropriate to educational needs and practice competencies of the student.
9. Willingness to provide access to agency case records which are pertinent to student activities and learning needs.
10. Willingness to provide support services and appropriate facilities for student use, including an adequate and regular place from which the student can operate, clerical services, necessary supplies and equipment, access to telephone, and (if possible) reimbursement for travel expenses incurred during assigned duties.

### **Organization/Agency Application Process**

1. Agencies meeting the criteria are encouraged to complete an electronic Organization/Agency Application and submit it to the Practicum Education Program.
2. Applying agencies will be reviewed by the Practicum Education Program for approval and notified via email.

### **Practicum Instructor Certification Process**

Social workers wanting to become a Practicum Instructor for the School of Social Work must complete an application and be approved by the Practicum Education Director and Practicum Education Committee.

1. Practicum Instructors must hold a bachelor's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program. It is preferable that the Practicum Instructor be licensed in the state of Arkansas as an LSW, LMSW, or LCSW. Occasionally practitioners from other disciplines may be considered to serve as the Practicum Instructor.
2. Practicum Instructors must practice at a School of Social Work approved internship site.
3. Practicum Instructors must demonstrate commitment to the education of BSW students and have adequate time and resources to supervise a student on a consistent basis.
4. Practicum Instructors must observe the NASW Code of Ethics and operate within its context.

### **Practicum Instructor Application**

1. Eligible individuals within qualifying agencies who have an interest in providing practicum instruction will complete an application in addition to the general organizational application.
2. Qualifications for certified Practicum Instructors include the following criteria:
  - a. BSW or MSW degree from CSWE accredited social work program.
  - b. Licensure preferred
  - c. Expertise in their area of practice
  - d. Experience in practicum instruction preferred
3. Practicum Instructors shall participate in training by the School of Social Work each year to maintain certification.
4. A Practicum Instructor's certified status may be reviewed at any time by the Practicum Education Director and Practicum Education Committee if concerns develop regarding the quality of the educational experience, supervisory relationship, or if ethical concerns arise regarding the Practicum Instructor's behavior. Certification status may be suspended at any time by the Practicum Education Director in conjunction with the Practicum Education Committee.
5. Any Practicum Instructor whose certification has been suspended may appeal this to the Practicum Education Director in writing. The Practicum Education director and the Practicum Education Committee will review any such appeals and reply to the organization and Practicum Instructor once a decision has been made.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Practicum Team**

*The Practicum Education Director is Expected to:*

1. Assume responsibility for the overall management and direction of the Practicum Education Program.
2. Assign a Practicum Liaison to work in conjunction with the agency-based Practicum Instructor.
3. Provide suggested learning goals to aid the design of learning objectives and the selection of learning activities by the student and Practicum Instructor, if necessary.
4. Provide guidelines, evaluation tools, and protocols for the evaluation of the student.
5. Provide needed orientation and training to Practicum Instructors.
6. Be available to the student, the Practicum Liaison, and the Practicum Instructor to facilitate a resolution to problems that may arise.
7. Monitor and evaluate the quality of internship experiences provided by the various agencies and organizations utilized as practicum placements.

***The Student Intern is Expected to:***

1. Purchase access to Tevera (Experiential Learning Cloud), the online platform utilized by the School of Social Work Practicum Education Program.
2. Demonstrate awareness and adherence to all relevant professional standards, including, but not limited to the NASW Code of Ethics.
3. Adhere to the Standards of Social Work Education.
4. Meet all academic pre-requisite and co-requisite requirements for practicum education.
5. Read the Practicum Handbook and demonstrate understanding of its policies.
6. Meet weekly with the Practicum Instructor on a regular basis.
7. Be prepared for all supervision meetings with the Practicum Instructor and alert the Practicum Instructor to topics that need to be discussed during the upcoming meeting.
8. Meet with the Practicum Instructor and the Practicum Liaison jointly at least twice each semester for Midterm and Final Evaluation meetings.
9. Attend the agency on days and at times agreed on by the student and Practicum Instructor, and if unable to attend, notify the agency supervisor prior to or at the start of the workday.
10. Behave in a professional manner: take responsibility to understand and carry out assigned duties, meet all deadlines, and seek direction when needed.
11. Identify themselves as a social work intern in all professional interactions and interventions.
12. Carry out agency related assignments in a manner consistent with agency policy and procedures.
13. Prepare records and reports in accord with agency policy, procedures, and format.
14. Identify learning needs and prepare a learning contract with specific learning activities that are acceptable to the Practicum Instructor and Practicum Liaison.
15. Purchase professional liability insurance and provide proof of professional liability insurance. Cost of insurance will be reflected in student fees.
16. Take responsibility for ensuring personal safety while performing internship duties.
17. Complete and submit all practicum monitoring and evaluation forms and reports required by the agency and school.
18. Discuss with the Practicum Instructor, Practicum Liaison, or Practicum Education Director, any areas of significant disagreement, dissatisfaction, or confusion related to the practicum experience.

19. Complete the required number of hours and course requirements for the practicum internship.
20. Meet all course requirements of Practicum Seminar.

***The Practicum Instructor and Practicum Agency Are Expected to:***

1. Clearly present internship expectations to students during placement with the agency.
2. Provide the student with a thorough orientation to the agency, its purpose, structure, policies, procedures, and ethical standards.
3. Provide regularly scheduled supervision to the student (at least weekly).
4. Provide the student with suitable workspace, equipment, and support staff.
5. Include the student in regular staff meetings and staff training sessions.
6. Assign duties and responsibilities that are appropriate to the student's learning needs and that are increasingly difficult, demanding, and challenging.
7. Assign duties and responsibilities that help the student develop a broad range of social work knowledge and skills.
8. Work with the student in ways that recognize the internship first and foremost as a learning experience.
9. Monitor the student's work and progress and regularly provide feedback.
10. Evaluate the student's performance in a fair, respectful, rigorous, and thorough manner.
11. Meet at least twice each semester with the student and Practicum Liaison to discuss the internship and student progress.
12. Complete all evaluation forms and reports required by the school.
13. Model ethical practice and refrain from any inappropriate or unethical behavior toward the student (e.g., verbal abuse, sexual harassment, dual relationships).

***The Practicum Liaison is Expected to:***

1. Assume responsibility for assisting in the development of a learning plan that will provide the student with an array of appropriate and challenging learning opportunities.
2. Monitor the student's internship experience and assist in evaluating the student's performance.
3. Facilitate the student's learning by providing guidance and serving as a source of information.
4. Meet with the student and the Practicum Instructor for midterm and final evaluations, to discuss the internship and evaluate the student's progress.
5. Assist the student in integrating social work theory and the specific experiences of the practicum through facilitation of Practicum Seminar.

### **III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS**

#### **Practicum Seminar**

The Seminar course is taken concurrently with the practicum internship. Student competencies are explored in the practicum sequence and, as such, evaluation of performance leading to mastery of these competencies is essential. Each Practicum Seminar is similarly designed as a small group, solution-oriented learning environment where students' complete assignments that reflect their ongoing learning process and skill development with a focus on professional

development. Practicum Seminar is an interactive class that requires student engagement both with their Practicum Liaison and their student colleagues. Assignments specific to the seminar class can be found in the syllabus on the designated Blackboard site.

### **Seminar Section Assignments**

Students are enrolled in Seminar and Internship sections by the Practicum Education Program Director and School of Social Work staff. Seminar section assignments are made based on available resources, type of internship, student grouping, and other issues which might affect the student learning environment.

**All students are expected to complete the requisite number of hours in Practicum within the parameters of the semester they are enrolled in Practicum. For BSW students that is 220 hours per semester for two semesters for a total of 440 hours.** If this is not going to be accomplished within the time frame of a semester, the student may receive an “incomplete” if they are deemed to be in good standing by the Practicum Liaison and the Practicum Education Program Director. The student could also fail the course if all required hours are not completed. When an incomplete is assigned for the grade, the student must obtain approval from the Practicum Education Program Director and the internship placement for completion of internship hours. Failure to obtain an approved plan to fulfill the course requirements will result in the student receiving a failing grade.

**\*\*It must be noted** that the student cannot begin the second semester of practicum until a grade has been earned for the previous semester. When this cannot be accomplished, the student will have to postpone practicum until eligible for matriculation into second semester practicum. If the hours required cannot be completed by the end of the semester for students in their final practicum placements, the student may receive an “incomplete”, which could delay graduation.

If a practicum student is absent for a significant period, there are four options:

- a. Withdraw from practicum, with the consent of the Practicum Liaison and the Practicum Education Program Director.
- b. Earn an “incomplete” and complete internship requirements the next time that practicum course is offered, or under special circumstances.
- c. Complete the course requirements with an extension of time and approval from the practicum placement; or
- d. Earn a failing grade.

Students may take off all school holidays and any holidays observed by the agency. It is the student’s responsibility to make their internship placements, including their Practicum Instructor and Task Supervisor, aware of university holidays. The student must still, however, complete all required practicum hours. If the student elects to work through a holiday with the approval of their Practicum Instructor and Practicum Liaison, the hours earned will count toward the required hours. Students who wish to complete internship hours on holidays, evenings, or weekends, must obtain approval prior to the completion of the internship hours. If a student receives special permission from their Practicum Instructor and Practicum Liaison to work after hours, the Practicum Instructor or other appropriate task supervisor must be available to the student by phone, if not in person for supervisory consultation if needed.

Students may be given time away from the agency to attend conferences or other educational activities if the activity is relevant to the students' learning experiences. This is done only with the advanced approval of the Practicum Instructor. Students may count up to 16 hours of continuing education per semester as practicum hours. Other community meetings and agency specific training shall count as regular internship hours with approval from the Practicum Instructor.

## **POLICY REGARDING SUMMER INTERNSHIPS**

BSW students who have completed their first internship and/or Practice II and III, are eligible, *pending approval*, to complete an internship during the summer 10-week session. If students are hoping to complete their first internship in the summer, they will need to have completed Practice II and III with a "C" or better and complete a **Summer Internship Approval Form**, including a reference from either their Practice II or Practice III instructor. If a student hopes to complete their second internship in the summer, they will be required to complete the **Summer Internship Approval Form**, which will include a reference and signature from their current Practicum Liaison and the Practicum Education Program Director.

## **IV. ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES RELATED TO RETENTION AND CONTINUATION**

### **Procedure for Monitoring Student Progress:**

Monitoring student progress is important for the Practicum Instructor, the Practicum Liaison, and the student. Each must take responsibility to see that monitoring is an ongoing process that takes place from the first day of practicum until the last day. Evaluation of practice takes many forms; student self-evaluation, evaluation provided by the Practicum Instructor, Task Supervisor, and Practicum Liaison are all integral parts of performance informed practice. The student and the Practicum Instructor will meet on a weekly basis to review the learning contract, adjust tasks and assignments, and discuss progress. The Practicum Liaison will monitor student progress via weekly journal entries, participation in Practicum Seminar, individual meetings, and through open communication with the Practicum Instructor. It is also the student's responsibility to monitor their progress by appropriate supervision and ongoing review of the learning contract and progress toward learning goals.

The Midterm and Professional Behaviors Evaluations play a significant role in monitoring student progress, facilitating communication among the Practicum Instructor, Practicum Liaison, and student, and identifying any need for mid-course corrections to the learning plan. At this point, it is important that all parties agree with the evaluation of progress, the need for any changes, and future monitoring expectations.

### **Evaluation of Practicum Experience**

**Policy for evaluating student learning and practicum setting effectiveness congruent with the social work competencies.**

The policy of the BSW Practicum Education Program is to ensure quality practicum experience for all BSW students through a multi-pronged and ongoing approach utilized to evaluate practicum setting effectiveness and ensure that it is congruent with the social work competencies.

The following procedures are utilized to support this policy for evaluating practicum setting effectiveness for BSW students:

Evaluation is a critical component for learning and overall professional growth. It is especially important during practicum internships since the student is expected to be continuously refining their social work skills and preparing for independent social work practice. Evaluation provides essential information on the student's strengths and identifies areas where additional growth is needed. Because parts of the evaluation process are subjective, it is imperative to have open communication between all parties involved in the practicum internship. The student, the Practicum Instructor, and the Practicum Liaison all play essential roles in the evaluation process and in making practicum a meaningful professional learning experience.

The fundamental purposes of student evaluation in Practicum internships can be categorized by the following:

1. Evaluation provides the student with an assessment of competency development in the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for advanced professional practice.
2. Evaluation provides the student with guidance, encouragement, and incentive to continue
3. Professional growth.
4. Evaluation provides the program and the student with a written record of performance.
5. Evaluation is an important piece of shaping effective practice in the professional development of students.

Evaluation, in the form of performance feedback, is an integral part of the supervisory/teaching conferences between the student and the Practicum Instructor and/or Practicum Liaison. Students meet regularly, a minimum of once a week, with the Practicum Instructor for this purpose. The weekly Practicum Seminars serve as another source of feedback through peer and Practicum Liaison consultation. In summary, evaluation is ongoing throughout each of the practicum courses and provides critical analysis of performance by the student, other student colleagues, the Practicum Instructor, and the Practicum Liaison. Formal evaluations of student performance are conducted and documented at midterm and end of each practicum internship course. The following sections offer a more detailed description of the formal evaluation process.

### **Midterm Evaluation**

This evaluation occurs at mid-point of the semester. The meeting is scheduled at a time when the Practicum Instructor, Practicum Liaison, student, and Task Supervisor (if applicable) can all be in attendance. Both the student and the Practicum Instructor should have their written evaluation completed at the time of the meeting with the Practicum Liaison. It is good practice for the Practicum Instructor to have reviewed the evaluation with the student prior to the midterm

evaluation meeting, so the meeting is not the first time the student receives the evaluative feedback, allowing the student an opportunity to formulate questions, or a plan to address any areas of concern. In addition to assessing the student's progress, this is the time to adjust assignments, reaffirm or modify the learning contract, and in general, make plans for effective use of time remaining in the semester.

In addition to the Midterm Evaluation, Practicum Instructors complete a **Professional Behaviors Evaluation**. The Professional Behaviors Evaluation Form is used to assess students' demonstration of observable professional behaviors (e.g., professionalism, communication, accountability, ethical conduct, culturally responsive practice, and use of supervision) that complement, but are distinct from, the competency-based midterm evaluation. Practicum Liaisons will also refer to this evaluation, along with other available information, when making recommendations regarding student readiness for summer internship approval.

### **Final Evaluation**

The final evaluation also involves the student, the Practicum Instructor, and the Practicum Liaison. This final evaluation allows for a comprehensive review and documentation of student performance. As with the midterm evaluation, the Practicum Instructor and student are encouraged to make the evaluation process as collaborative as possible, discussing openly student strengths and areas for growth/improvement.

### **Practicum Evaluations and Reference Requests**

Practicum evaluations that were completed prior to Fall 2020 are stored electronically by the School of Social Work and are available upon request to third parties if the student has signed a release of information for that purpose. Third parties include, but are not limited to, potential employers, other schools, licensing boards, etc. These documents may be obtained by e-mailing a request to [scsw@uark.edu](mailto:scsw@uark.edu). Please include name, graduation date, contact information, and name and address of the school or university requesting the evaluation. Practicum evaluations completed during or after Fall 2020 are available on each student's Tevera (Experiential Learning Cloud) account.

### **Student Evaluation of Practicum Internship**

In addition to evaluating student performance, students complete a **Student Evaluation of Internship**. The purpose of this evaluation is to assist the practicum instruction staff with future planning. The information derived will be used in ongoing evaluation of internship sites and practicum instruction. Data regarding the placement and Practicum Instructor evaluations are compiled and evaluated by the Practicum Education Director and the Practicum Education Committee. This data is utilized to provide feedback to the agency and the Practicum Instructor regarding strengths and areas for improvement. Additionally, this information will be used to inform programming for Practicum Instructor training and orientation.

### **When A Student Is Not Making Satisfactory Progress in Practicum**

The practicum education course is quite different from other Social Work courses. While a practicum placement in a community agency is organized around educational objectives determined by the program curriculum, it also involves professional responsibilities to clients, agencies, and the community. As a result of the involvement of these many stakeholders, it is imperative that we recognize early and respond quickly to students' performance problems.

When problems occur, it is crucial that the Practicum Instructor, student and faculty Practicum Liaison attend to several issues:

- The rights of clients to adequate professional service.
- The educational needs of the student (including access to corrective and supportive services, as appropriate).

At any point during a student's placement, an agency, the Practicum Education Program Director, or the Student Retention and Success Committee can remove the student from placement and bypass the problem-solving suggestions listed below. In such a situation, the reason for removal of the student and any efforts made by the agency to remediate the student issue will be documented on an Internship Incident form or a Retention and Success form. If the student is terminated from placement by the agency for cause, they will be referred for a level 2 or level 3 intervention. The student will not be referred to a different internship placement until a recommendation is made, either through the Level 2 intervention or the Student Retention and Success Committee (Level 3). If the student is referred to the Student Retention and Success Committee, the Practicum Education Program defers to the committee's recommendations.

1. When a student is not progressing at a satisfactory rate any or all, of the below may occur:
  - a. The Practicum Instructor may notify the Practicum Liaison as soon as a problem is identified.
  - b. The Practicum Liaison may arrange a conference with the Practicum Instructor.
  - c. The Practicum Instructor, Practicum Liaison, and/or student may meet to discuss and assess the problem.
  - d. The student may be given formal notification that his/her performance is substandard as documented on the Student Retention and Success form. Guidelines are developed in writing for the student to improve the standard of performance. In this process, the student may be referred to or can request the involvement of the Student Retention and Success Committee. Any party can request the involvement of the Student Retention and Success Committee by making a request in writing for a referral from the Practicum Education Program Director.
  - e. If the student does not meet the requirements of an internship within the allotted time frame, a failing grade is earned.
2. If it is determined by the Practicum Education Program Director, with input from the Practicum Liaison and/or Practicum Instructor, that there is a legitimate and compelling reason that the student did not meet the learning and professional objectives of placement, the Practicum Education Program Director, Practicum Liaison, Practicum Instructor and/or Student Retention and Success Committee may allow the student extra time to complete the internship. It is important to note that substandard performance is

not considered a legitimate and compelling reason for the student not to meet the learning and professional objectives of Practicum placement. The decision to allow additional time to complete learning and professional objectives is based on the student's work to date, the agency's willingness to commit continued resources, the Practicum Instructor's willingness to commit extra time, and the student's commitment to the identified plan. When it is possible that a student may meet the learning and professional objectives of internship if given extra time:

- a. The student will be assigned an "incomplete", and a specific plan will be identified to complete the internship hours and learning activities/assignments, following the University policy and timeline regarding assignment of "incomplete".
- b. If the student has not accomplished the objectives of practicum by the end of the extension, the student may earn a failing grade.

3. If a student does not wish to spend the additional time necessary to successfully complete the practicum assignment, the options are as follows:

- a. Formally withdraw from the Practicum Seminar and internship courses, or
- b. Earn a failing grade for both courses.

4. Documentation of student progress can be assessed using the following tools:

- a. Direct observation of skills
- b. Client records
- c. Seminar assignments
- d. Feedback from other agency staff or other professionals
- e. Written work
- f. Use of supervision
- g. Practicum Instructor assessment of performance
- h. Practicum Liaison assessment of performance

## **CHANGE OF PRACTICUM PLACEMENT**

Changes in practicum placement after the placement has started are only considered in extreme cases. Factors such as a shift in area of interest, or outside employment are not sound academic reasons for change of placement.

The following are policies regarding the change of students from an agency or organization.

1. If the student requests a change of placement:

- a. The student will discuss issues warranting the proposed change in placement with the Practicum Liaison. The Practicum Liaison, student, and Practicum Instructor may meet and discuss the issues involved. If the issues can be resolved, the student will remain at the placement.
- b. Should the student still desire a change in placement after a meeting to attempt resolution of the issues, the Practicum Liaison will discuss the issues with the Practicum Education Program Director to clarify the status of the student and agency.
- c. A joint conference with the Practicum Education Program Director, Practicum Liaison and student may occur. The agency Practicum Instructor may or may not be involved in this meeting.

- d. If the decision is made to remove the student from the practicum placement, and the student is 'practicum ready', a suitable agency will be contacted, and arrangements will be made for the student to interview for a possible alternate placement. This shall be accomplished as soon as feasible, so the student will not fall behind in internship hours.

**\*\*There is no guarantee that an alternate placement can be made. In this situation, the same protocol for practicum advising will be followed. Original referral counts as one referral for the semester. The student may receive two other referrals for possible placement if necessary, and the student is deemed practicum ready. The Practicum Education Program will make no more than three referrals for placement interviews per semester. If a student is unable to secure placement after three referrals for interview, they will not be placed for practicum that semester and could be referred to Student Retention and Success Committee.**

- e. If a change of placement is granted within the first two weeks of internship, and the student has been actively involved in appropriate internship activities, the student may count hours earned at the initial placement toward the total internship hours requirement for the semester.
2. An agency may request removal of a student from placement for any reason. Should an agency request the removal of a student, for whatever reason:
    - a. The School of Social Work will remove the student within a time frame that is agreeable to the agency.
    - b. Either prior to, or after removal of a student from the agency, depending on the urgency of the removal and/or the agency concerns, the Practicum Liaison will discuss the situation that led to the agency request with the agency and Practicum Education Program Director, and the Termination Form will be completed.
    - c. If the agency simply wishes to explore whether a student should be removed from placement, the Practicum Liaison and/or Practicum Education Program Director may meet with agency representatives to determine options.
    - d. If it is possible for the student to complete placement, with special attention from the school, it is deemed better for the student's overall learning.
    - e. If this is not possible, and the student is terminated from placement by the agency, they will not be referred for another placement that semester. The student will be free to re-enroll in the internship class at the next possible opportunity that the internship class is offered provided the Practicum Education Program deems them 'Practicum ready.'

### **Removal of a Student from Practicum**

A student *may* be removed from practicum under the following circumstances:

1. Request of the student.
2. Request of the placement agency.
3. Recommendation from Student Retention and Success Committee.
4. Decision of the Practicum Education Program, including the recommendation of the Practicum Liaison in consultation with the Practicum Education Program Director. The following are grounds to remove the student from Practicum:

- a. Failure to maintain confidentiality about a client as mandated by agency policy and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.
- b. Failure to abide by the NASW and Arkansas Code of Ethics.
- c. Failure to follow the policies or procedures of the School of Social Work or the University of Arkansas.
- d. An attempt or threat to harm oneself.
- e. An attempt or threat to harm someone else.
- f. Repeated tardiness at the agency and/or tardiness without notification.
- g. Repeated absences from the agency and/or absence without notification.
- h. Repeated change in scheduled practicum hours without prior approval.
- i. Refusal to accept supervisory directions from Practicum Instructor, task supervisor, or agency staff.
- j. Inappropriate behavior in connection with the practicum placement.
- k. Student's lack of progress in correcting issues or concerns identified in Practicum Instructor or Practicum Liaison documentation.

Students who are removed from practicum for any of the reasons listed above may be referred to the Student Retention and Success Committee to make recommendations to the student and Practicum Education Program regarding the student's status.

The final decision regarding removal from practicum may be made by the Practicum Education Program Director, the agency, or Student Retention and Success. The student may appeal the decision following the guidelines in the UA SCSW Student Handbook.

Whether the student will be allowed to return to practicum in the same or a different agency will depend on the seriousness of the incident requiring termination from placement and/or the ability of the student to work through the issues resulting in termination from placement.

The policy of the BSW Practicum Education Program is to ensure quality practicum experience for all BSW students through prioritizing student safety and thereby making it possible for students to participate in meaningful internships across the micro, mezzo, and macro systems at the generalist level of practice.

The following procedures are utilized to support this policy of protecting the safety of BSW students in practicum:

- Orientation activity which addresses commonly occurring issues.
- Practicum Seminar offers skills labs to assist with the creation of learning contract objectives, child maltreatment and mandated reporting, and other practice-related topics.
- Information about UACARES; Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS); Pat Walker Health Center; Center for Educational Access (CEA); Title IX; and other campus resources is provided in the syllabi in all practicum seminar classes.
- Liaisons and Practicum Instructors will receive training focused on creating inclusive classrooms.
- All practicum syllabi include clear guidelines regarding expectations for respectful Practicum Seminar conduct.

## **V. SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY**

It is the policy of the University of Arkansas to prohibit sexual harassment of its students, faculty, and staff. Incidents of sexual harassment are demeaning to all persons involved and impair the ability of the institution to perform its educational function. Sexual harassment of students may constitute discrimination under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and sexual harassment of employees is prohibited under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Sexual harassment of students includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct which takes place when: submission to the conduct is either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's academic status or advancement, submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for academic decisions affecting that individual; and/or such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive learning environment.

Students who believe that they have been subjected to sexual harassment are encouraged to report the problem promptly to their academic dean or to the Dean of Students. University grievance procedures are available to individuals who wish to pursue complaints of sexual harassment. Students may use the Student Complaint Procedure or the Student Academic Appeal Structure. For additional and specific information refer to the "Sexual Harassment Policy" in the University of Arkansas catalog.

## **VI. OUT OF REGION/INTERNATIONAL PLACEMENTS**

Students may qualify for out-of-region or international placements. Any student interested in such a placement should arrange a meeting with the Practicum Education Director at least 6 months prior to an out-of-region/international placement, the student will:

1. Inform the Director of Practicum Education Director by email as early as possible of interest in out of region/international placement. Identify the area of interest and region preferred.
2. Submit three reference letters to the Practicum Education Program indicating the appropriateness of students for this type of placement.
3. The student will provide the Practicum Education Director with a list of potential placement agencies.  
which the Practicum Education Director will utilize to determine placement opportunities
4. A proposed site may only be approved after confirmation of appropriate learning opportunities for the student, appropriate supervision, application, and approval by the Practicum Education Committee.
5. Following approval of a placement, the referral process utilized for area placements will be utilized.

## **VII. STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

See document links on [School of Social Work website](#) for:

- Standards for Social Work Education
- 3 Levels of Review for Student Standards and Support

