

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

School of Social Work

Practicum Education Manual

School of Social Work, NC State University
1911 Building, Main Office, Room 205, Campus Box 7639
Raleigh, North Carolina 27695-7639
Tel: 919-515-2492
Fax: 919-515-4403
<http://socialwork.chass.ncsu.edu/>

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INTRODUCTION

This manual provides guidance to students, agencies, and faculty regarding practicum internship, the “signature pedagogy” of social work education. Signature pedagogy represents the central form of instruction and learning through which a profession socializes its students to perform the role of practitioner. This manual provides guidance regarding placement requirements, selection, expectations, supervision, and evaluation. It is also designed to assist and support practicum instructors and practicum faculty liaisons, as they educate and prepare students. This manual does not replace or supersede the NC State University Student Handbook or the BSW and MSW Student Handbooks. Students are responsible for reviewing this practicum manual, as well as the university and BSW or MSW student handbooks, and for referring to the university website for official information regarding NC State policies and requirements.

Students are encouraged to contact their assigned Faculty Practicum Liaison or the Director of Practicum Education if they have any questions about the practicum process or the information contained in this handbook.

PURPOSE OF PRACTICUM EDUCATION

Practicum education is the signature pedagogy of social work, serving as the central form of instruction and learning where a profession socializes its students to perform the role of a practitioner. The purpose of practicum education is to connect the theory and concepts learned in the classroom with real-world practice situations. The curriculum and practicum faculty work closely together to ensure this integration.

The overall purposes of practicum education are:

1. To enhance the student's ability to apply social work values, theory, skills, and knowledge to a broad range of systems.
2. To provide opportunities for students to learn to foster empowerment among diverse and vulnerable populations.
3. To provide a setting in which the mission and goals of the School of Social Work may be actualized.

The social work practicum is similar to the residency programs for medical students. Students have the opportunity to learn, apply, and refine values, knowledge, and skills under the guidance of experienced social work practitioners who serve as practicum instructors and task supervisors. These practicum experiences are brought back to the weekly Integrative Practicum Seminar,

where they are further examined within the context of the course curriculum and the social work profession.

PRACTICUM EDUCATION ORGANIZATION

THE PRACTICUM EDUCATION TEAM

The Practicum Education Team is composed of the Director of Practicum Education, the BSW Practicum Coordinator, the MSW Practicum Coordinator, and Practicum Faculty Liaisons.

The Director of Practicum Education oversees the Practicum Education Program. Key responsibilities include coordinating efforts of the practicum team; representing practicum education on relevant committees, tasks groups and advisory boards; establishing new practicum sites; and addressing student concerns.

The Practicum Director and Coordinators are responsible for ensuring an adequate supply of appropriate practicum placements through ongoing recruitment and evaluation of sites. They coordinate the assignment of students to practicum placements and oversee and monitor these placements to support successful learning experiences. In addition to these duties, the Director and Coordinators also serve as Practicum Faculty Liaisons.

Practicum Faculty Liaisons serve as the vital link between the School of Social Work, the practicum agency, and the student intern. Liaisons meet with the student and the Practicum Instructor at least once each semester to review the learning experience, assess progress and provide support as needed. They remain available to both students and supervisors throughout the placement to answer questions and address concerns.

In addition to the liaison role, Practicum Faculty Liaisons also serve as Practicum Seminar Instructors. The Practicum Seminar Instructor reinforces the social work perspective throughout the practicum experience and, with input from the practicum instructor, evaluates the student's performance and assigns the final grade.

PRACTICUM INSTRUCTORS

The Practicum Instructor is the MSW practitioner based at the practicum placement agency who provides direct supervision of the student's learning. The Practicum Instructor collaborates with the student to identify appropriate learning activities, provides weekly supervision, and evaluates the student's performance throughout the placement.

TASK SUPERVISORS

A student may be assigned a Task Supervisor if the student's practicum instructor is off-site or not consistently available during the practicum. The Task Supervisor is a staff member at the

agency who may not hold a social work degree but is responsible for guiding and supporting the student's day-to-day learning activities and practicum experiences.

OFF-SITE SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS

In cases where the assigned Practicum Instructor does not hold a CSWE-accredited social work degree, the NC State School of Social Work assumes responsibility for reinforcing a social work perspective in the student's practicum experience. To ensure this, students are provided with regular supervision by assigned practicum faculty or by qualified volunteer social workers from the community.

This off-site supervision may occur individually, in triads, or in small groups. It offers students a dedicated space to ask questions, raise concerns, discuss practicum experiences, present cases, and engage in other supervision activities as directed by the practicum faculty designee.

The off-site supervisor maintains regular communication with both the agency task supervisor and the faculty liaison to support continuity and coordination. Supervision sessions are generally scheduled at the same time and day each week and count toward the student's required practicum hours.

STUDENTS

The student is responsible for actively engaging in and taking ownership of their learning experience. This includes demonstrating initiative and a willingness to connect and apply classroom knowledge to real-work practice within a practicum setting.

STRUCTURE OF PRACTICUM

PRACTICUM HOURS

Students are required to complete a designated number of practicum hours. BSW students complete 420 hours over one semester. First-year Traditional MSW students complete 224 hours in the fall and spring semesters. Second-year Traditional and Advanced Standing MSW students complete 336 hours in the fall and spring semesters. Traditional students complete four sequential practicum courses (SW 651-654), while Advanced Standing students complete two semesters (SW 653 & 654). All practicum hours must be verified by the Practicum Instructor. Students are responsible for punctuality, attendance, and accurate recordkeeping.

Students are expected to attend practicum as scheduled, communicate with supervisors regarding absences, and follow policies related to holidays, weather closures, and illness. Students should adhere to the University holiday schedule and may use their discretion regarding whether to

complete practicum hours on those days. Excessive absences may require make-up hours or jeopardize successful completion of the practicum. Participation in certain university events may be considered excused absences with faculty approval.

LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

BSW learning goals focus on developing entry-level generalist skills. Students should engage clients, apply classroom knowledge, and demonstrate growth in practice behaviors aligned with CSWE competencies.

MSW learning expectations include demonstrating both generalist and advanced practice skills. Students should show progression across competencies, apply theory to practice, and engage in reflective supervision to deepen professional identity.

EXPECTATIONS AT PRACTICUM SETTINGS

BSW and MSW students should be flexible, engaged, open to feedback and professional in practicum. Students are expected to contribute to the agency team, maintain confidentiality, demonstrate commitment to social justice and cultural competence in agency work.. Practicum is viewed as an opportunity to learn from both positive and challenging experiences. Weekly supervision is required.

PROGRAM POLICIES

TECHNICAL STANDARDS

The School of Social Work at North Carolina State University is committed to supporting students as they prepare to become professional social workers. The Technical Standards document describes the expectations for professional and ethical behavior that all Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Master of Social Work (MSW) students must satisfy in order to participate in, and graduate from, the BSW or MSW program.

The School of Social Work is preparing students for careers as professional social workers and professional social workers are ethically obligated to protect the clients and communities we serve, based on the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. Thus the School of Social Work has established student standards that emphasize the necessary skills, attributes, and competencies of a successful graduate of the program grounded in the code. The School of Social Work will hold students accountable for complying with these standards within the traditional classroom setting and in practicum placements.

Becoming a professional is a gradual process. The Technical Standards for Professional and Ethical Behavior articulate minimum expectations for students in the following areas:

1. *General Requirements*
2. *Communication*
3. *General Standards of Professionalism*
4. *Self-awareness and Reflective Listening*
5. *Respect for Diversity and Social Justice*
6. *Ethical Conduct*
7. *Interpersonal Skills*
8. *Academic and Professional Standards*

North Carolina State University School of Social Work Technical Standards for Professional and Ethical Behavior can be found in the Appendix.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

Strict standards of academic honesty will be enforced according to the University policy on academic integrity. Violations of academic integrity will result in an F for the assignment and may result in an F for the course. Violations include:

- Plagiarism (which means representing another's ideas, writings, words, and/or work as your own without proper acknowledgement);
- Obtaining another person's assistance on academic work you are expected to complete independently;
- Assisting another student on work expected to be completed independently;
- Reporting false information on practicum work.

Consult the following website for further details:

[Academic Integrity: Overview/Office of Student Conduct](#)

ACADEMIC WARNING AND PROBATION

Students may be suspended or placed on probation by the University. More detailed information regarding Academic Probation and Academic Warning can be found at:

STUDENT CONDUCT

The primary purpose for discipline in the University setting is to protect the campus community. Consistent with that purpose, reasonable efforts will also be made to foster the personal and social development of those students who are held accountable for violations of University regulations. For specific definitions or examples of academic dishonesty and nonacademic misconduct with possible sanctions, see the NC State Code of Student Conduct at:

[Student Conduct Policies](#)

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is a core principle of social work education and practice. Students are expected to keep personal information shared by others private and not discuss it outside the class. However, confidentiality is not absolute—any disclosure of intent to harm oneself (or others) must be reported in accordance with ethical and legal obligations. Students experiencing personal challenges are encouraged to speak with the instructor for support and referral to appropriate resources. Both students and faculty are expected to honor confidentiality within these professional limits.

NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

It is the policy of the State of North Carolina to provide equality of opportunity in education and employment for all students and employees. Educational and employment decisions should be based on factors that are germane to academic abilities or job performance. Accordingly, North Carolina State University does not practice or condone unlawful discrimination in any form, as defined by this policy.

Discrimination is unequal and unlawful treatment based upon race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students. Information about accommodation requests can be found at the following link:

[Accommodation Requests/Disability Resources Office](#)

For more information on NC State University's policy on working with students with disabilities, please see the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation (REG02.20.1).

[REG 02.20.01 - Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities/Policies, Regulations & Rules](#)

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Most problems encountered by students can be resolved through communication between the student and faculty member and/or advisor. If a matter arises that cannot be resolved to the student's satisfaction within the school, the student may follow NC State Undergraduate or Graduate Grievance Procedures.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (MOA)

Practicum agencies must complete a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the School and University before being able to engage in practicum internships. The Director of Practicum Education manages MOA applications with agencies that host interns.

NASW CODE OF ETHICS

Professional ethics are at the core of social work practice. The NASW Code of Ethics sets forth the values, principles, and standards to guide social workers' conduct. The Code is relevant to all social workers and social work students, regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, or the populations they serve.

The NASW Code of Ethics serves six purposes:

1. It identifies core values on which social work's mission is based.
2. It summarizes broad ethical principles that reflect the profession's core values and establishes a set of specific ethical standards that should be used to guide practice.
3. It is designed to help social workers identify relevant considerations when professional obligations conflict or ethical uncertainties arise.
4. It provides ethical standards to which the general public can hold the social work profession accountable.
5. It socializes practitioners new to the field to social work's mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards.

6. It articulates standards that the social work profession itself can use to assess whether social workers have engaged in unethical conduct. NASW has formal procedures to adjudicate ethics complaints filed against its members. In subscribing to this Code, social workers are required to cooperate in its implementation, participate in NASW adjudication proceedings, and abide by any NASW disciplinary rulings or sanctions based on it.

The complete Code of Ethics can be seen at:

[Code of Ethics: English](#)

While all aspects of the NASW Code of Ethics are essential to professional conduct, two areas are particularly emphasized in practicum settings - impairment and discrimination.

NASW Code of Ethics: Section 4.05, Impairment

Students are admitted to practicum at the discretion of the School of Social Work. If a student experiences or appears to be experiencing impairment as defined in the NASW Code of Ethics Section 4.05, the social work faculty has an obligation to take action to safeguard students, practitioners, and clients. Therefore, the BSW or MSW Program Director, in consultation with the Practicum Director and Practicum Coordinator, may deny a student's admission into practicum or may suspend or terminate the practicum placement for reasons of student impairment. The School of Social Work may require the student to provide professional documentation of fitness for practice before being admitted to practicum or continuing in practicum.

Similarly, if a social work student is experiencing or believes another student is experiencing impairment as defined under Section 4.05, the student has an obligation to share this information with a social work faculty member.

4.05 (a) Social workers should not allow their own personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment and performance or to jeopardize the best interests of people for whom they have a professional responsibility.

4.05 (b) Social workers whose personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties interfere with their professional judgment and performance should immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action by seeking professional help, making adjustments in workload, terminating practice, or taking any other steps necessary to protect clients and others.

NASW Code of Ethics: Section 4.02, Discrimination

Students in practicum placement should adhere strongly to the School of Social Work's nondiscrimination policy and NASW Code of Ethics Section 4.02. The ability to work effectively with diverse populations is essential to success in the program and in the professional practice of social work. A student who states an unwillingness to work with clients, colleagues, or student peers based on race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability may be denied entry to practicum placement.

4.02 Social workers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability.

CORE COMPETENCIES

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), our accrediting body, aims to promote and strengthen the quality of social work education by providing national leadership and a forum for collective action. CSWE pursues this mission through setting and maintaining policy and program standards, accrediting undergraduate and graduate degree programs in social work, promoting research and faculty development, and advocating for social work education.

The CSWE uses the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) 2022 to accredit baccalaureate and master's-level social work programs. EPAS supports academic excellence by establishing thresholds for professional competence. It permits programs to use traditional and emerging models of curriculum design by balancing requirements that promote comparability across programs with a level of flexibility that encourages programs to differentiate.

Competency-based education is an outcome performance approach to curriculum design. Competencies are the social work knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes that prepare students to practice at the designated level. The goal of this outcome-based approach is to demonstrate the integration and application of the competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

The nine social work competencies can be found in the official EPAS 2022 document at the following link:

[Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards](#)

Students must demonstrate these specific competencies while completing their practicum. Under the direction and guidance of the agency Practicum Instructor, students will engage in tasks that

allow them to learn and demonstrate practice behaviors consistent with classroom curricula and social work ethics and values.

PRACTICUM EDUCATION PROGRAM

CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION TO PRACTICUM

There are specific guidelines that determine students' eligibility for practicum placement. The BSW and MSW Programs do not provide any course credit based on life or previous work experience of the student. Only students officially enrolled in the BSW Program or admitted to the MSW Program can register for social work practicum placement courses (SW 490, SW 491, SW 651, SW 652, SW 653, and SW 654) or be matched with a placement agency.

BSW Students: In the semester before practicum placement, BSW students are enrolled in SW 480, Prep for Practicum. While in this class, students will have individual meetings with the BSW Practicum Coordinator to discuss areas of interest and to discern which agency will be the most appropriate match to meet the student's learning needs. Consideration will be given to location and other variables as well.

MSW Students: Before being admitted to their first practicum course (SW 651 for traditional and SW 653 for advanced standing), the student must attend a mandatory Practicum Education Information Session. During this meeting, students will receive information about practicum expectations and requirements and about the placement process. Students will then complete a Practicum Application, which is reviewed by the Practicum Director and/or the MSW Practicum Coordinator and used to identify potential placement options. Students entering the second year of their MSW program are admitted to practicum after successfully completing generalist practicum course SW 651 and attending an advising conference with the Director of Practicum or the Practicum Coordinator.

DENIAL OF STUDENT ADMISSION TO PRACTICUM PLACEMENT

Students may be denied admission to practicum for reasons that include:

- Substandard (unsatisfactory) academic performance
- Failure to complete practicum prerequisites
- Failure to abide by the NASW Code of Ethics
- Failure to abide by the NCSU Code of Student Conduct
- Failure to abide by the NC State School of Social Work Technical Standards

If a student disagrees with a denial decision, the student may appeal through the Student Review Committee and/or through the NC State University student appeals process. However, there is no appeal for substandard (unsatisfactory) academic performance.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST PREVENTING INTERNSHIP IN CERTAIN AGENCIES

Students are not permitted to intern at agencies where they or immediate family members are or have been clients within the past five years. Family members cannot serve as a student's BSW/MSW or Task Supervisor. The School of Social Work does not access client information from agencies or students, therefore, it is the responsibility of the student to decline (or not select) a placement based on this conflict of interest. Students who want a placement that could be perceived as a conflict of interest are encouraged to discuss the situation with the Practicum Director or Coordinator before requesting or accepting the placement. Students who secure or attempt to secure a placement in an agency where a known conflict of interest exists may be administratively dropped from the practicum course.

PRACTICUM COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Practicum placement internship is integral to social work education and for preparing students for professional practice. Many social work graduates and practicing professionals say that it was the practicum experience they valued most in their social work program. Your practicum placement is an opportunity for you to engage in the process of becoming a professional social worker by learning/practicing the knowledge and skills of social work practice in an agency setting.

There are many different settings in which social work is practiced. In all agencies there are opportunities to learn about many things. You may find yourself placed in an agency that was not your first choice, but ends up being a great opportunity. The relationships that you build during practicum placement can be instrumental in your professional career. It is a place and time to make a good impression on professionals in the field of social work.

We require you to interview with an agency recommended by the practicum director or coordinator. While we work very collaboratively with each student and agency, our philosophy is "Grow where you are planted". Some of the best learning stories are told by students who found themselves in placement settings they would not have chosen.

You may feel very ready for your practicum placement. You may feel uncertain. All of this is fine. What is most important is positioning yourself as a receptive learner in your practicum agency and in the classroom. This stance of flexibility, engagement and willingness to learn is the foundation of a positive practicum education experience.

You will have a practicum instructor who will meet with you in the agency every week for at least an hour for supervision. Your practicum instructor is someone who has been approved by the School of Social Work. We consider practicum instructors like faculty – they have a role in teaching professional practice skills to our students.

All practicum instructors are unique, with different styles of instruction and expectations. Much depends upon the agency and the type of social work that is practiced. We expect you will be in a professional agency setting in which ethical values, social work skills and professionalism are demonstrated and taught. Expectations of BSW, generalist-year MSW and

specialized-year MSW will vary based on corresponding CSWE competencies and practice behaviors.

What can you expect from practicum education?

- Expect to learn about clients, the agency and yourself
- Expect to increase your practice skills, from wherever you are starting
- Expect to be challenged – a good practicum placement requires you to go beyond your comfort zone
- Expect to have at least one supervision conference each week
- Expect to learn about and utilize community resources
- Expect to be part of the agency team and to contribute to that team
- Expect to be valued as a contributor and given the time to learn
- Expect to put into practice what you have learned from books

What is expected from you?

- Be professional – dress appropriately, be dependable and prompt, respectful and receptive
- Bring evidence informed information from the classroom to the practicum agency
- Communicate often and openly with your practicum instructor
- Be committed to racial, social and economic justice
- Approach your clients with compassion and a willingness to help
- Be receptive to feedback from your practicum instructor, your liaison and from others in the agency
- Be open to working with diverse groups on diverse issues
- Complete all required written work for practicum thoughtfully and on time
- Talk with your practicum instructor if you have concerns; bring your faculty liaison into the conversation if you feel your concerns are not being resolved
- Work actively to develop skills and integrate your classroom knowledge in the practicum agency
- Grow where you are planted.... be open and receptive to learning

PRACTICUM SEMINAR

Students must participate meaningfully in regular integrative practicum seminars during each semester. BSW students attend seminar weekly and MSW students attend twice a month. During practicum seminar, students are expected to participate in reflective discussions, lead discussion groups, and collaborate in activities. Practicum seminar is one of several mechanisms for monitoring student progress in practicum and checking in with students to assure they are receiving a high quality learning experience.

INTEGRATION OF PRACTICUM AND CLASSROOM

The BSW and MSW programs at NC State University are generalist and advanced generalist programs, respectively. Students learn practice skills at the micro, mezzo and macro levels. The practicum internship serves as the link between knowledge gained in the classroom and the practice of social work from generalist and advanced generalist perspectives.

BSW students enter practicum in the final semester of their degree program. They spend at least 420 hours in a placement agency over the course of one semester. They integrate what they have learned in the classroom into direct practice. The assigned coursework in the concurrent seminar class (SW 490) is designed to help students examine the theoretical and ethical aspects of the practicum experience. Over the course of this experience, students must demonstrate all CSWE core competencies measured against specific practice behaviors.

MSW students complete practicum throughout the course of their degree program concurrent with academic course work. They enter practicum during the fall semester and remain in the same agency through the spring semester. Within the practicum internship, components of Practice, Human Behavior in the Social Environment, Policy, and Research sequences are integrated and practiced by agency-based social work interns. Practice behaviors for Competencies 1-9 are learned in the classroom and demonstrated in the practicum.

The curriculum structure of the MSW program emphasizes and reinforces the integration of practicum with practice theory, knowledge, skills, and values on social work practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities throughout all generalist and specialized practicum internship courses. Students in practicum must demonstrate all CSWE Competencies measured against specific practice behaviors.

PRACTICUM PLACEMENT PROCESS

REQUIRED PRACTICUM HOURS

BSW students complete a total of 420 hours in practicum over the course of one semester. This generally equates to a 32-hour practicum week, Monday-Thursday. Participation in the weekly seminar class may be counted toward the accrual of practicum hours.

Traditional MSW students complete a total of 224 practicum hours each semester during their first year, for a total of 448 hours during the academic year. This generally equates to a 16-hour practicum week. Second-year Traditional MSW students and **Advanced Standing MSW** students complete 336 practicum hours each semester, for a total of 672 hours during the academic year. This generally equates to a 24-hour practicum week. MSW students typically

complete practicum hours Wednesday through Friday. Participation in the twice monthly seminar may count toward the accrual of practicum hours.

MSW students enter practicum at the beginning of the fall semester and remain in the same agency through the spring semester. Traditional students complete practicums for both the generalist and specialized years, for a total of 1,120 practice hours at graduation. Advanced Standing students have earned a BSW degree from a CSWE-accredited program and have completed at least 400 hours of undergraduate practicum. Four hundred (400) hours are accepted or transferred when the Advanced Standing student is admitted. These students complete two semesters of MSW practicum, for an additional 672 hours. Advanced Standing students have a total of 1,072 practice hours at graduation.

By mutual agreement, students and supervisors can make adjustments to the standard practicum schedules. This may include other days and/or evening and weekend hours. Changes to schedules cannot interfere with class schedules. Based on the set-up and/or needs of the placement agency, practicum hours may be gained in-person or remotely.

For both the BSW and MSW programs, exceptions to the number of school-required hours can only be made by the Practicum Director. Such exceptions would include extended illness or other such serious and unavoidable circumstances. Under no circumstances can a student be allowed to complete fewer hours than the 900 minimum practicum hours set by CSWE.

STEPS TO PRACTICUM EDUCATION

The School of Social Work selects practicum agencies that meet guidelines for professional social work experience and appropriate supervision. Students work closely with the Director of Practicum Education or the Practicum Coordinator to establish an agency-based practicum placement. This involves engaging in dialogue with the director or other designated practicum faculty. This communication often takes place through email, so students should pay close attention to their university email accounts.

BSW students will begin the placement process the semester before entering practicum while enrolled in SW 480, Preparation for Practicum. At this time, the BSW Practicum Coordinator will meet with each student to discern which agency will be the most appropriate match to meet the student's learning needs. Consideration will be given to location and other variables. For **first-year traditional** and **advanced standing MSW** students, the process begins with a mandatory virtual practicum information session. During this session, students will learn what needs to be done to secure a placement. The first step is to complete an electronic practicum application, which is accessible on the practicum website. For **second-year MSW** students, the process begins with a practicum advising conference with the Practicum Director or Coordinator. This face-to-face advising conference takes place the spring semester before specialized-year placement.

The steps below detail the process:

Step 1: Think seriously about the kind of placement that you want and the population that you

wish to serve. Think about which skills you want to attain and what kind of tasks you want to have in your internship.

Step 2: Use the Agency Search on the practicum website to review the list of approved agencies. Because we enlist new agencies all the time, there may be some that are not on the website. Therefore it is critical to work in close cooperation with the practicum coordinator or director as you identify placement options of interest.

Step 3: Meet with the Practicum Coordinator or Director for a practicum advising conference. Based on expressed interests, fit with agency, and the assessment of the practicum faculty member, a potential placement opportunity will be identified.

Step 4: The practicum faculty member will contact the chosen agency to make a referral and alert them to expect to hear from the student. The student will then contact the agency supervisor via email to schedule an interview. The student will attach a current resume to this interview request. A student-agency interview is required – there are no exceptions.

See more information below about the interview.

Step 5: After your interview, follow up with the practicum coordinator or director to discuss your assessment of the interview. If you are not selected by the agency, the Coordinator/Director will assist you in arranging an interview with a different agency.

Step 6: Once you receive an offer for placement, the Coordinator or Director will follow up with the agency to confirm.

Step 7: Once you have a confirmed placement, you must immediately complete the [Student Practicum Update Form](#). This is an important step and is critical to school recordkeeping and practicum communications.

Step 8: You will want to stay in touch with the agency prior to the beginning of the placement. This should be in the form of a check-in to make sure all is well. Sometimes supervisors leave or there may be agency changes before the semester begins. Of course, we have no control over this, but the sooner we know of an issue, the sooner we can respond with productive alternatives.

PRACTICUM PLACEMENT INTERVIEW

Practicum placement interviews can be competitive, so students should present in a serious and professional manner. Dress as you would for any professional job interview, whether in person or virtual. Research the agency. Be familiar with their services and read their website. Expect the agency to ask questions to determine how much you know about them. Students should come to the interview able to express clear goals and learning priorities. Students should be prepared to ask specific questions about clients served, available learning experiences, opportunities for skill development, type of setting (structured or unstructured), methods of supervision, etc.

Suggested Interview Questions from Students

1. What kind of activities and programs does this agency undertake?
2. What activities, tasks, and/or projects will I be able to undertake?
3. What specific skills will I be able to develop at this agency?
4. Does this agency have a particular theoretical approach to intervention?
5. What are the general characteristics of clients and communities served by this agency?
6. What is the approach to and structure of supervision?
7. What amount of interaction does a student have with other students and with permanent staff?
8. What opportunities exist for inter-professional collaboration or cooperation?
9. What types of in-service training or workshops and conferences will be available to me?
10. What kinds of cases and/or projects do you anticipate assigning to me?
11. What kinds of skills do you hope a student will bring to the agency?
12. How much independence and initiative do you expect me to demonstrate?
13. How are students helped to handle issues of diversity regarding age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and mental and physical ability on both staff and client levels?

Students should be prepared to answer questions about their background, educational and career goals, and why they might desire the particular placement. At the interview, agency personnel assess the student's level of interest and suitability for the general type of assignments they have in mind. Typically, it is at this point that placement decisions are finalized. However, if there are well-founded reservations about the suitability of the match between the agency and the student, the Practicum Education Office should be informed at once by the student and/or the agency practicum instructor.

Students should voice any special considerations they may need. Students must comply with agency requirements such as background checks, drug screens, and/or immunization verification, once they accept the placement. Agencies hold orientations at the beginning of the placement. This is in addition to practicum orientation by the school.

STUDENT ACCEPTS PLACEMENT OFFER

Once a student accepts an offer of placement, an agreement is being made with the agency to begin practicum the following semester. This is not negotiable and cannot be changed without practicum advising consultation with the Director of Practicum Education. Students will not be allowed to switch agencies simply because they discovered a placement that they like better. It is important to maintain positive professional relationships with agencies, and undoing a commitment is unprofessional.

Students must maintain some contact with the agency from the time of the offer through the beginning of the practicum semester. This assures that students will be aware of any changes in the agency that might jeopardize placement and provides students with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the agency.

STUDENT IS NOT ACCEPTED BY PLACEMENT AGENCY

Not all students will be accepted by their first choice agency for placement. Students must be mindful that the placement process can be competitive. Although there are many available opportunities in the area, there are also several colleges and universities that have social work programs. Their programs are also working hard to give their students the best opportunities. Some agencies prefer to interview several students before making a selection. Invariably this means that some students may have to interview with a second agency. This is not a sign of failure or cause for alarm.

If a student has not been accepted after their initial interview with a potential practicum placement, the student will be directed to interview with another agency. If the student is not accepted by a practicum agency a second time, the student will be re-evaluated by the Practicum Coordinator or Director of Practicum Education.

If the reason a student has not been accepted by more than one agency is due to student-related issues, the Director of Practicum Education reserves the right to refer the student to the Program Director for further assessment of fit for practicum placement. Again, this is not a sign of failure or alarm. It is an opportunity for further assessment.

If the student is rejected for agency-related reasons, like space, competition, supervision, etc., the student will be offered other placement options at the discretion of the Director of Practicum Education until an appropriate fit is made.

STUDENT DECLINES PLACEMENT OFFER

We strongly discourage shopping for the “perfect” placement. Students will interview with one agency. If for any reason that placement does not move forward, a student will be referred to a second agency. Students will not interview at multiple agencies with the intention of selecting from more than one offer. Agencies depend on our practicum faculty to send them the most appropriate candidates. Yet, we recognize it may not always be a good fit for various reasons. However, in order to make the best use of everyone’s time and talents, a student can only decline one offer. Even this one declination must be for good reason and discussed with the Practicum Coordinator or Director.

TERMINATION FROM PLACEMENT

A student's practicum placement may be terminated by the student, Agency Practicum Instructor, an agency administrator, or Faculty Liaison, in consultation with the Director of Practicum Education, for any of the following reasons:

1. Level of student preparation for the placement: For the BSW and Generalist MSW practicum placement, it is assumed students have acquired the competencies expected for participation in the work-world (e.g., arriving on time, managing one's

schedule and communicating it to others as appropriate, presenting and conducting one's self in a professional manner). This includes professional dress and professional self-presentation as well as appropriate interpersonal interactions. In addition, it is expected students have acquired the necessary knowledge for "entry level" professional practice (reflected in objectives for BSW curriculum and generalist curriculum of MSW programs) prior to the beginning of the Specialized Year practicum placement. For any practicum placement, if evidence contradicts the above expectations, despite appropriate efforts by the Agency Practicum Instructor and Faculty Liaison to support the student in addressing such deficits, it may result in the student's withdrawal from the practicum placement.

2. Failure to comply with the Code of Ethics: Students are expected to comply with the NASW Code of Ethics.
3. Failure to comply with the School of Social Work Technical Standards: Students are expected to comply with the school's Technical Standards.
4. Agency breach of Affiliation Agreement: The agency is expected to provide the learning experiences and/or appropriate supervision to meet the expectations identified in the Affiliation Agreement between the agency and the University. This agreement is referred to as the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).
5. Unexpected events: There may be times in the life of the student or in the agency where continuing in that practicum placement setting might jeopardize the quality of the student's learning experience (e.g. personal trauma, agency re-organization, etc.).
6. "Mismatch": While every effort will be made to resolve any challenges, there may be rare instances where differences in expectations, learning styles, or interpersonal dynamics between the student and practicum instructor hinder the student's learning. In such cases, recommendations for adjusting the practicum placement may be necessary.

In some instances, termination of a placement reflects the fact that practicum can be highly successful in helping students discover social work is not what they expected and is not appropriate for them. Sometimes, it is possible for a change to be made in the student's assignment, either to another unit of the agency or to another agency altogether. This action may necessitate extension of the student's program.

Students have the right to fair and consistent application of evaluation criteria in their practicum work and to a fair and consistent application of written procedures for termination from the program should this be necessary. Please refer to the *BSW or MSW Student Handbook* for additional information about termination and dismissal for academic and conduct reasons.

Whatever the reasons prompting consideration of practicum placement termination, the student, Faculty Liaison and Agency Practicum Instructor will work as a team to resolve problems and to come up with appropriate solutions. The procedures that follow describe the process to terminate practicum placement, if the situation cannot be resolved.

The following steps outline the process of dialogue for performance-related concerns:

1. Student and agency Practicum Instructor discuss the problem. When efforts to address practice and learning issues have resulted in little or no progress, the Practicum Instructor must promptly contact the Practicum Faculty Liaison.
2. Student, Practicum Instructor, and Practicum Faculty Liaison discuss the problem. The Practicum Faculty Liaison must intervene with both the student and the Practicum Instructor, sometimes jointly, to clarify the problem and to suggest ways of improving the situation, including the establishment of timelines and a contract for improvement.
3. If the problem cannot be solved at this level, the Practicum Faculty Liaison consults with the Practicum Director. If the solution is not found within the agency, the decision to terminate is made by the Practicum Instructor and Practicum Faculty Liaison in consultation with the Practicum Director.
4. The student, Practicum Faculty Liaison and Director of Practicum Education discuss next steps for the student, which could include transfer to a new agency or withdrawal from practicum course.
5. A summary of the termination decision, including the event(s) prompting the termination, are written by the Faculty Liaison and presented to the Director of Practicum Education. This summary, once signed by faculty liaison and student, is placed in the student's file. This form is used only to inform placement decisions and for record keeping. It is not forwarded to anyone outside of the School of Social Work.

REASSIGNMENT OF STUDENT IN PRACTICUM PLACEMENT

Placement reassignments may occur when issues unrelated to a student's performance make continued placement at the agency no longer in the student's best interest. The Practicum Faculty Liaison and Practicum Instructor, in consultation with the Director of Practicum Education, are responsible for determining whether concerns are related to performance or nonperformance factors.

Nonperformance factors may include but are not limited to:

- Inadequate agency resources to support practicum internship.
- Learning experiences in the agency are too narrow.
- Agency reorganization that hinders student supervision and task assignment.

- Agency closes.
- Agency administrator terminates the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).
- Student/agency mismatch.
- Practicum Instructor leaves the agency.
- Practicum Instructor has change in responsibilities and cannot continue placement.

In order to protect the integrity of the professional relationship between the School of Social Work and Agencies, steps are taken by the student and the school to lessen the harm caused by placement termination regardless of termination reason. The student must complete the termination/exit process with the agency Practicum Instructor. This process includes administrative requirements, completions of paperwork, returning equipment, and termination of contacts with assigned clients, if requested by the practicum agency.

For **MSW students**, the practicum placement is closely integrated with classroom assignments. Therefore, it can be an academic hardship for the student to change placements. However, the school is mindful and understanding of agency shifts and other circumstances that necessitate a change in practicum placement agency. The Director of Practicum Education communicates with classroom instructors when the student has to make a placement change in order to facilitate continued integration and smooth transition.

PRACTICUM PLACEMENT POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

PRACTICUM ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to arrive on time and to remain for the entirety of their scheduled practicum work hours. If unable to attend due to an emergency or unexpected illness, students are expected to notify both the agency practicum instructor and faculty practicum liaison prior to the start of the work day. Attendance at practicum seminar is also required. If unable to attend seminar due to an emergency or unexpected illness, students are expected to notify the seminar instructor prior to the start of class. Attendance records are kept for practicum placement and seminar.

Official university policies concerning attendance can be found at the following website:
[REG 02.20.03 - Attendance Regulations | Policies, Regulations & Rules](#)

ILLNESS AND/OR EMERGENCY

Occasional illness and other emergencies may cause students to be absent from practicum internship. Each student is allowed two (2) days of personal time off (PTO) per semester, but must still inform agency practicum instructor and faculty liaison of this absence. The

practicum liaison should be informed of absences of more than two days per semester. Plans for making up extended absences (e.g., prolonged illness) should be discussed with the faculty practicum liaison and the agency practicum instructor.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the event of inclement weather, students should consider their personal safety in making decisions about attending practicum. If the university is open, students are expected to attend practicum or make up any missed hours, if they choose not to attend. If the university is closed, students are *not required* to attend their internship or to make up missed hours. If the university is open, but the agency is closed, students are not required to make up those days or hours. If however, the agency is continuing to engage in virtual or remote work, students are expected to complete remote work or make up those hours.

It is advised that students and agencies consider activities students can accomplish off-site in the event remote work is required or the agency is closed for an extended period due to inclement weather conditions or other unexpected circumstances. Examples may include completing literature searches, updating materials, developing curriculum or workshop content, creating social media strategies, etc.

Missed hours can never result in students interning fewer hours than the minimum required by CSWE.

HOLIDAYS AND UNIVERSITY WELLNESS DAYS

Students are entitled to all university holidays, university wellness days, and agency holidays. No practicum hours accrue for these. If a student chooses to attend placement on a holiday or wellness day, these hours can be recorded.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVATIONS

Students may request time away from practicum for religious holidays and observations. No practicum hours will accrue for this. Students may utilize personal time off (PTO) or make up any missed hours, if needed.

PERSONAL TIME OFF

Students in practicum are allowed two days (16 hours) of personal time off (PTO) each semester. Students may use his time however they choose (e.g., 8 hours for a vacation day or 2 hours to leave early for a doctor's appointment). PTO hours will be recorded on the timesheet and count toward the total hours for the semester. Students must provide advance notice to their Agency Practicum Instructor for planned PTO and promptly notify them in case of illness or emergency preventing attendance. Any absence exceeding 16 hours must be made up.

ATTENDANCE AT UNIVERSITY SPONSORED EVENTS

Students are allowed to attend special programs sponsored by the School of Social Work (e.g., workshops, career fairs). There may also be university sponsored events students are encouraged to attend. The Practicum Director will notify the practicum agencies in advance of such programs.

Students can be given practicum hour credits for school and university-sponsored programs identified by the Practicum Director or Program Directors as relevant to professional development.

TRAININGS, WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

Any assignment or activity required or requested by the practicum agency counts toward practicum hours. This may include outside readings, research for the agency, meeting attendance, trainings, workshops, conferences, and more. Students must obtain prior approval from the agency practicum instructor before attending these activities, after which they will receive practicum hour credits.

RECORD OF PRACTICUM HOURS

Students are responsible for tracking their practicum hours and must have them verified by the agency Practicum Instructor. An Excel spreadsheet is available on the practicum website for students and instructors to track hours, though some agencies may prefer students to use their own documentation. Students can choose the timesheet format that best suits their needs. The total number of hours is submitted electronically by the Practicum Instructor through the student evaluation.

Students have until the last day of the exam period to accrue hours.

EARLY COMPLETION OF PRACTICUM

The last day of classes is typically the last day of practicum each semester. **BSW students** may complete hours prior to this time, but not before all practicum seminar assignments are complete. **MSW students** may complete hours prior to this time, but not earlier than two weeks before classes end. If needed, students have until the last day of exams to accrue hours.

MONETARY COMPENSATION

Any monetary compensation provided to students must be arranged through a separate agreement between the student and the agency. The agency must ensure that such agreements comply with all applicable state and federal laws, including the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), if applicable. These arrangements are considered paid practicum placements and must continue to adhere to all guidelines, policies, and procedures governing unpaid placements. Regardless of compensation or stipend, the placement must remain a structured learning environment that prioritizes the student's educational experience.

TRANSPORTATION TO PRACTICUM AGENCY

Interns are responsible for arranging their own transportation to and from the internship site. Commuting time does not count toward the required internship hours. The Raleigh/Triangle area has limited public transportation options; therefore, interns are encouraged not to rely solely on public transit. While a small number of placement agencies are accessible by bus, these options are limited and may not be compatible with all internship assignments.

It is the responsibility of the agency to inform interns if driving is considered an essential duty of the internship and to manage any related requirements directly with the intern.

Interns should be aware that placements involving driving as an essential duty may require a Motor Vehicle Records (MVR) check, notification to their personal auto insurance provider regarding vehicle use for internship purposes, and full compliance with the agency's driving policies.

North Carolina State University does not oversee or manage transportation or driving requirements related to internships and does not provide insurance coverage for interns operating a vehicle as part of their internship duties.

Any accidents involving a student while participating in an internship should be reported to the Director of Practicum Education and the agency Practicum Instructor.

Students are not permitted to transport clients in their personal vehicles

TRANSPORTING CLIENTS

Students are not permitted to transport clients in their personal vehicles. The university does not provide liability coverage for such situations, and students would be personally responsible in the event of an accident. Additionally, we aim to avoid placing the financial burden of increased auto insurance or additional coverage on students.

HOME VISITS

Home visits may be a regular component of a student's practicum placement or may be required in specific situations as determined by the agency. Agencies will be expected to take reasonable measures to ensure the safety of each student. **At a minimum, the same security provided to staff must be provided to students.** In certain circumstances students may need additional support and security. The Director of Practicum Education should be consulted by the student, Practicum Instructor or Practicum Faculty Liaison if safety is a concern.

SAFETY

As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve some risk, depending on location, clients served, etc. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. The Practicum Instructor must assure the student is oriented to agency guidelines and procedures for risk reduction and personal safety, as well as agency emergency procedures. The student is responsible for being aware of and adhering to safety

policies and practices related to agency and/or community settings.

In certain circumstances students may need additional support and security. The Practicum Liaison should be consulted by the student or Practicum Instructor if safety is a concern. All personal safety incidents, (e.g., an accident which may have resulted in an injury or a case of sexual harassment or stalking) must be reported immediately to the Practicum Liaison and Director of Practicum Education by either the student or the Practicum Instructor. Students should also notify instructors regarding any safety concerns.

INJURY WHILE IN PRACTICUM PLACEMENT

Medical services that may be required by a student due to injury occurring while performing practicum duties are usually not covered by agency (unless the student is employed by the agency and covered by Workman's Compensation), and not covered by NC State University or the School of Social Work. The student's own medical insurance may or may not cover the medical treatment depending on the insurance plan.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Some organizations require criminal background checks prior to accepting students for placement. This is commonly the case for hospitals, schools, clinics, mental health facilities, and many government agencies. In some instances, the agency will initiate the background check process; however, students are often responsible for securing their own.

Students may request a background check through the Director of Practicum Education. These checks are conducted by a company contracted by NC State University, and all information is handled with strict confidentiality.

It is the student's responsibility to determine whether their placement agency requires a background check and to initiate the request in a timely manner. Background check processing may take up to two weeks. Students are responsible for the cost of the background check when required.

AGENCY REQUIREMENTS

Some agencies may require students to complete additional pre-placement requirements such as medical physicals, immunizations, tuberculosis (TB) testing, drug screening, or similar health-related assessments. Agencies may also require driver's license checks and proof of personal automobile insurance.

Agencies reserve the right to deny placement to any student who does not complete these requirements or who does not meet the agency's standards based on the results of such tests or assessments. Any associated costs are the responsibility of the student.

All agency-specific requirements should be discussed during the placement interview to ensure clarity and preparedness.

The NC State School of Social Work does not partner with agencies that have requirements or

practices that violate the anti-discrimination policies of the University or the School.

INTERN LIABILITY INSURANCE

All students will have intern liability insurance as provided through a group policy with the General Administration of the University of North Carolina System in the amount of \$2,000,000/\$4,000,000 (individual/aggregate claim). Insurance is paid through student fees and is required for each semester the student participates in practicum internship. A copy of the Certificate of Insurance (COI) is available upon request by contacting the Director of Practicum Education.

MONITORING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

LEARNING AGREEMENTS

The Learning Agreement is a collaborative plan developed by the student, agency, and the School of Social Work within the first few weeks of practicum. It aligns with CSWE core competencies and serves as a roadmap for the student's professional learning and skill development.

Students and Practicum Instructors jointly complete the agreement, linking agency tasks and outcomes to required competencies for the student's degree level. The Practicum Faculty Liaison reviews the document—typically during an agency visit—to approve it or offer guidance for improvement.

The Learning Agreement is a flexible, living document that can be updated throughout the semester, provided revisions remain consistent with CSWE competencies and program expectations.

SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

All students must receive regular supervision from an individual with an MSW from a CSWE-accredited program and a minimum of two years of post-MSW practice experience. The only exception is for BSW students in agencies with a supervisor who holds a BSW from a CSWE-accredited program and has a minimum of two years of post-BSW practice experience.

Supervision is a critical part of the Practicum experience and ideally takes place once a week for an hour. This hour of weekly supervision is time for the student and Practicum Instructor to collaboratively plan, organize, review, and evaluate the practicum experience. The Practicum Instructor should also help students process their thoughts and feelings about the people and systems they work with, encouraging self-reflection and professional growth. Both the Practicum Instructor and the student are expected to participate actively in the supervisory conference. The student should take the initiative to prepare a written agenda before each meeting to ensure the discussion is focused and productive.

OFF-SITE SUPERVISION

Agencies where the on-site supervisor does not have a social work degree may enlist a qualified external social worker to provide supervision for the student. The external supervisor must have an MSW from a CSWE-accredited program with at least two years of post-graduate practice experience. The Practicum Director or Coordinator must approve this individual. The external supervisor must also complete the required electronic Practicum Instructor paperwork. The school recommends that the external supervisor and the student establish a consistent weekly meeting time. If the agency is unable to identify a suitable supervisor, the school of social work takes responsibility for ensuring the student receives appropriate supervision. The school may either connect the student to a qualified social worker in the community, or assign a qualified faculty member to provide regular supervision.

AGENCY VISITS

Practicum Faculty Liaisons will generally visit students and Practicum Instructors at the practicum agency at least twice during the practicum experience. For BSW students, the first visit takes place early in the semester and is used to establish reasonable expectations for student performance and to review the Learning Agreement. The second visit, at the end of the semester, is to review the final evaluation. For MSW students, the first visit takes place midway through the fall semester to assess progress and review the Learning Agreement. The second visit takes place in the spring semester to process the experience, review learning and prepare for the final evaluation.

If at any point student performance falls below expectations, the Practicum Instructor, student, and Practicum Liaison will meet to determine what actions need to be taken to support improvement. These interventions will be documented in a performance improvement plan.

Additional visits to the agency may be scheduled as needed. These could be related to concerns about student performance, a request for support or guidance from the Practicum Instructor, or other reasons determined by the student, the agency, or the school of social work. The Practicum Director and Practicum Coordinators are always available to students and the agencies to offer support and guidance as needed.

GRADING PRACTICUM COURSE

BSW PRACTICUM

The BSW practicum experience consists of two courses: the seminar and the practicum internship. Final grades are determined by different criteria for each.

SW 490: Integrative Practicum Seminar

The final grade for the seminar course is assigned by the seminar instructor. It's based on student performance on all required assignments and active, consistent participation in seminar classes.

SW 491: Community-Based Practicum Internship

The final grade for practicum is recommended by the Practicum Instructor and assigned by the Seminar Instructor/Practicum Liaison. Practicum Instructors complete an online final evaluation form, assessing students against the CSWE Core Competencies. Based on these evaluations and personal knowledge of the internship situations, the seminar instructors assign the students' final grades for the practicum internship course.

To pass this course, students must demonstrate competence in all areas of the curriculum. This includes:

- Reliable and consistent attendance at agency placement.
- Reliable and consistent attendance at Practicum Seminars.
- Effective completion of all course objectives as outlined in the syllabus.
- Successful demonstration of the competencies outlined in the Learning Agreement, as evaluated by the practicum instructor.

MSW PRACTICUM

For MSW practicum internship courses, the usual grading scale does not apply. Practicum is graded as pass/fail, with the letters of S (Satisfactory) or U (unsatisfactory). The transcript shows either pass or fail for practicum internship courses.

Grades are based on the final evaluation of practicum internship and performance in the practicum seminar. Students are assessed against the core competencies as outlined in the Learning Agreement. In order for students to pass this course, they must:

- Demonstrate reliable and consistent attendance at agency placement.
- Demonstrate reliable and consistent attendance at Practicum Seminars.
- Effectively meet the objectives of the course as outlined in the syllabus.
- Effectively meet the objectives of the Learning Agreement.

Failure to meet any of these criteria may result in a grade of U (Unsatisfactory), and the student will not pass the course. Failure to pass this course can result in extended time in the program as practicum courses are prerequisites and co-requisites for other courses.

EMPLOYMENT WHILE IN PROGRAM

Due to the student workload, we do not recommend students engage in full-time work during the academic year. When employment is essential, work hours must be scheduled so as not to conflict with practicum placement, practicum seminar or classroom courses.

COMPLETING PRACTICUM AT PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT

The NC State School of Social Work recognizes the personal economic circumstances of some students may necessitate exploring practicum placement opportunities in their current places of employment. While we understand professional responsibilities and educational learning can intersect, it is important to distinguish between the objectives of job performance and those of academic and professional development. The primary focus of any practicum placement must be on the student's learning and competency development, not solely on fulfilling job responsibilities. In accordance with CSWE policy, practicum credit cannot be given for any past work experience.

In order for an employment-based placement to be approved, the following criteria must be met:

- The practicum placement must offer appropriate educational experiences that are directly aligned with the social work competencies and the level of practice expected for the degree the student is pursuing. This means the tasks and responsibilities assigned should reflect those typically carried out by a professional social worker at the corresponding level (BSW or MSW). In most cases, this will require the integration of tasks, activities, and projects that go beyond the student's current job scope. These additional responsibilities are essential to ensure the student is gaining new, relevant learning experiences and developing competencies that meet both academic and professional standards.
- A practicum instructor must be identified who is NOT the student's work supervisor and has no authority over the student's employment status.
- Students who pursue employment-based placements acknowledge that any disruption to their employment - such as termination, resignation, or changes in job duties - may directly impact their ability to continue in practicum placement. The School of Social Work does not guarantee alternative practicum placements within the same semester or academic year in the event that employment ends or is otherwise altered. Should such a situation arise, decisions regarding next steps and potential timelines for resuming or securing a new placement will be determined by the Director of Practicum Education and the appropriate Program Director, in consultation with the student and their faculty liaison.

Students interested in pursuing an employment-based placement must first consult with the Director of Practicum Education or their Practicum Coordinator to discuss the feasibility of this option. If the place of employment appears to be a viable practicum site and the agency is willing to support the student in this capacity, the student must complete and submit the Employment-Based Practicum Proposal to the Director of Practicum Education. The proposal form includes an outline of how the proposed practicum placement will meet the social work competencies at the appropriate level of practice, a job description or list of current job responsibilities, and signatures of all involved agency personnel. Approval is not guaranteed and will be contingent upon a review of the proposal to ensure it meets all educational and accreditation standards.

BECOMING A PRACTICUM PLACEMENT AGENCY

The NC State School of Social Work welcomes partnerships with agencies and community organizations that share our commitment to educating the next generation of social workers - advocates for positive social change, effective client interaction, and social justice. We seek placement sites that can offer professional guidance, support, and meaningful learning opportunities aligned with BSW or MSW-level practice. Ideally, partner agencies employ professional social workers who can provide supervision and ensure students gain a clear understanding of the social work perspective throughout their practice experience.

The following criteria are used in the selection of practicum agencies:

1. The agency has a point of view about practicum instruction that is consistent with the NC State School of Social Work.
2. There should be a clear alignment between the agency's mission and service delivery approach and the social work program's practice perspective. This alignment is essential to ensure that students are able to meaningfully integrate the knowledge, theory, values, and research taught in their BSW courses with real-world practice in the field.
3. The agency must be able to provide a qualified BSW- or MSW-level social worker to serve as the Practicum Instructor. This individual is responsible for overseeing the student's learning, providing supervision, and supporting the integration of classroom knowledge with field practice. In cases where a qualified social worker is not available on-site, the agency may designate another qualified staff member to serve as the Task Supervisor, responsible for overseeing the student's day-to-day activities. A qualified BSW or MSW social worker outside of the agency will be enlisted to provide weekly supervision. This external or off-site supervisor will fulfill the educational supervisory role and ensure the student is developing competencies in alignment with the social work curriculum.
4. The agency is able to provide the intern the opportunity to practice social

work in compliance with professional social work standards and ethics.

5. The agency must be able to consistently provide a range of internship assignments that are appropriate to the student's educational needs, level of practice, and learning goals. These assignments should offer meaningful opportunities for skill development, application of social work theories and methods, and engagement with diverse client populations or systems.
6. The agency must be able to provide the physical space, technology, and other necessary resources to support the intern in successfully completing their internship assignments. This includes access to a suitable workspace, relevant client or program materials, and any tools or systems essential to performing assigned tasks and meeting learning objectives.
7. The agency must be willing to allocate sufficient time for the ongoing supervision of the intern. This includes providing regularly scheduled supervision that supports the student's professional development, facilitates reflection, and ensures alignment with social work competencies and ethical standards.
8. The agency is willing to allocate time for orientation, seminars, and training for Practicum Instructors that are provided by the NC State School of Social Work.
9. The practicum instruction program must adhere to all applicable nondiscrimination laws and the policies of North Carolina State University. NC State is committed to providing equal educational opportunities and does not discriminate against applicants, students, or employees on the basis of race, color, gender, age, creed, ethnic or national origin, disability, political orientation, sexual orientation, or veteran status. We expect the same commitment from all agencies partnering with the School of Social Work to provide practicum education. Partner agencies must uphold inclusive, equitable practices in all aspects of student engagement, supervision, and professional development.
10. The agency is willing to enter into an affiliation agreement between the agency and North Carolina State University.

ESTABLISHING A PRACTICUM PARTNERSHIP

The exploration of a partnership between the NC State School of Social Work and a prospective practicum agency may be initiated by various individuals, including agency staff, students, community members, advisory board members, faculty, or others connected to the program.

To assess the suitability of the agency for practicum education, the Director of Practicum Education will schedule a meeting and/or site visit to discuss the agency's interest and capacity to provide the range of learning opportunities required to meet the educational goals of the practicum instruction courses. This conversation will focus on how the agency aligns with the program's learning objectives, social work competencies, and supervision requirements.

Following this discussion:

- The agency will decide whether it wishes to accept students for practicum instruction.
- The School of Social Work will determine whether the agency can meet the educational expectations necessary for a high-quality practicum experience.

If both parties agree to move forward, the agency must enter into a formal agreement with the University. This is done through the execution of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), which outlines the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of both the School and the agency.

Once an agency is approved, a detailed Agency Profile will be created and maintained as a resource for students exploring practicum opportunities. This profile will include contact information, description of services and client population served, available social work practice opportunities, hours of operation, and any site-specific internship requirements (e.g., background checks, drug screens, immunization records). This profile will be accessible to students, faculty, staff, and practicum instructors and serves as a key tool in the placement matching process.

To initiate this process, agencies must complete and submit the Agency Application, available at the following link:

[Agency Application for Practicum](#)

BECOMING A PRACTICUM INSTRUCTOR

Agency practicum instructors play a vital role in the education and professional development of our social work students. Instructors for BSW students must hold a BSW or MSW degree from an accredited school of social work and have a minimum of two years of post-graduation practice experience. Instructors for MSW students are required to have an MSW degree from an accredited program and at least two years of post-master's practice experience. All practicum instructors must have the support of their employing agency.

The agency practicum instructor is responsible for planning, supervising, and evaluating the student's internship experience, ensuring it aligns with the educational objectives of the program and fosters the student's professional development.

Instructors should demonstrate a genuine interest and ability to teach, strong communication and conceptualization skills, and the self-awareness necessary to serve as effective role models. They must possess professional competence within their area of practice, uphold the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, and exhibit the critical thinking and insight required for effective problem-solving. In addition, practicum instructors should be able to apply and communicate these skills both within their agency setting and in broader professional contexts as part of their teaching and supervision responsibilities.

Individuals typically become practicum instructors by virtue of their employment at an approved practicum agency where NC State School of Social Work students are placed. All potential agency practicum instructors must submit a Practicum Instructor Application, available at the following link:

[Practicum Instructor/Supervisor Application](#)

PRACTICUM ORIENTATION FOR STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS

All new interns attend a mandatory orientation to the practicum program at the beginning of their placement. This orientation counts toward students' required practicum hours. A separate orientation is held for new Agency Supervisors, and any veteran supervisors are welcome to attend. These events often include an enrichment component to enhance their teaching role with interns.

The orientation provides an opportunity to:

- Disseminate knowledge and guidance to Agency Supervisors and students on the teaching and integration of the nine core competencies in practice.
- Share ideas about integrating practicum and classroom curriculum.
- Help Agency Supervisors understand the integration of curriculum and practicum.
- Foster a network of communication between Agency Supervisors and the Department of Social Work.
- Disseminate the most current information reflecting accepted principles of practicum supervision (including legal issues, the supervisory relationship, optimizing the learning experience, and addressing student or agency challenges).
- Obtain information from community partners that can be useful to the practicum education program.

Topics covered in orientation include practicum expectations, Learning Agreement development, the CSWE 2022 competencies and their practice behaviors, practicum safety, the supervisor/student relationship, and social work ethics. Agency Supervisors are encouraged to recommend future learning topics to support their work. Throughout the year, Agency Supervisors may be invited to workshops to enhance their knowledge and skills and to network with other university partners.

BSW and MSW Practicum Orientation prepare students and Practicum Instructors for agency-based learning by outlining program expectations, ethical responsibilities, and integration of classroom knowledge with practice. It emphasizes technical standards, the NASW Code of Ethics, and the importance of supervision and professional development

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: How many practicum placement hours are needed to receive my degree?

A: The Council on Social Work Education establishes the minimum standard for the number of hours required to complete the BSW and MSW degrees. NC State University meets or exceeds these requirements as follows:

BSW: 32 hours per week over one semester	420 hours
First-Year MSW: 24 hours per week/per semester	336 hours
Second-Year MSW: 24 hours per week/per semester	336 hours
Advanced Standing MSW: 24 hours per week/semester	336 hours

Q: Do I find my own placement?

A: The practicum education office has long-standing relationships with social work agencies and is responsible for developing placement sites. Practicum education staff maintain regular contact with practicum agencies regarding student placements. However, we prefer a collaborative relationship with students during the placement process.

The practicum application begins the selection process. If you want to be placed at a specific agency, submit your request in writing to the practicum education office. The practicum office will then contact the agency to explore the feasibility of developing this placement. Students must fill in a Student Practicum Application form on the department website, indicating preferences for location and type of practicum work. The practicum office uses these forms to help match students to the best placement sites to advance their learning goals.

We are happy to make arrangements with agencies not listed on our website. You may know of many opportunities that we have not explored. We are always interested in adding new agencies to our list. You may contact agencies on your own to inquire about placements; however, you should check with the practicum office before making contact. A few agencies do not accept inquiries from students. There are also many agencies that welcome student inquiries. We are happy to give you approval to make contact where appropriate.

Q: Can I arrange a placement where I work?

A: This type of placement is called an employment-based placement and must be approved by the practicum education office. Approval depends on timely submission of the application and the integrity of the proposed practicum assignment. Such placements must meet CSWE standards.

Q: How far will I have to travel for my practicum placement?

A: Students are expected to allow approximately 45 minutes of travel time to and from their practicum placement site. Every effort will be made to plan a reasonable commute. The

commute depends on where you live and where the best placement opportunity can be found. This area does not have an extensive public transportation system. It can be very challenging to get to and from a placement if a student must rely completely on public transportation. Getting to and from the placement agency is the responsibility of the student.

Q: Do I need a criminal background check?

A: It depends. For many placements (especially those interning at schools and hospitals), a criminal background check is required. Fingerprinting, a physical exam, a PPD (tuberculosis test), and other health requirements may also be required. When possible, you will be notified about these requirements in advance.

Q: What if I am sick and miss several days of practicum?

A: Students are allowed up to two days (16 hours) of personal time off (PTO) each semester. Any additional hours missed beyond this allowance must be made up. Students are responsible for ensuring they meet the required practicum hours within the designated semester.

Q: Are there any evening or weekend placements available?

A: Evening and weekend practicum placements are limited, as many agencies are closed or may lack available supervision and appropriate assignments during these times. Typical placement days for BSW students are Monday through Thursday, while MSW students are typically placed Wednesday through Friday. Placement hours typically occur during standard business hours.

Students and agencies will agree upon the specific practicum schedule during the interview process. However, students are not permitted to miss any class sessions in order to complete practicum hours.

Q: As a traditional MSW student, do I need a new placement each year?

A: Yes. Generalist-level internships offer opportunities for developing generalist social work practice skills. Advanced-year placements focus on the development of advanced skills. In some instances an agency (generally a large agency) is able to provide an appropriate experience for both years. Employment-based placements must be approved by the practicum office.

Q: Can I interview at several agencies before selecting my placement?

A: No. Please do not think of this process as a shopping expedition. The practicum education office will work with you to arrange one interview for a practicum placement at an agency that meets your learning needs. If the interview goes well and you and the agency agree that the placement is an appropriate fit, it will be confirmed. If either party has reservations, another interview will be arranged.

Q: Do practicum placement hours count toward clinical licensure?

A: No. Hours toward licensure must be completed after receiving your MSW.

Q: Can I switch if the placement does not work out for me?

A: No: The relationship between the School of Social Work and its partner agencies is essential to the success of the practicum program. When you accept a placement, it represents a commitment both to your own learning process and to the agency. In many cases, agencies decline other potential interns once a placement is confirmed. If a student withdraws after accepting a placement, it may jeopardize the agency's opportunity to host a social work intern. For this reason, we expect students to approach their placement with professionalism and to work within the agency's structure to resolve any challenges. You are also expected to protect the integrity of the School of Social Work in your actions and conduct.

Should any ethical concerns or situations requiring professional consultation arise, you must contact your faculty practicum liaison promptly. While we are committed to ensuring your placement is a valuable and respectful learning experience, we also want to ensure your rights are protected and that you are not placed in situations that hinder your professional growth.

Every effort is made to ensure that an agency is a good fit before finalizing a placement. Once a placement is accepted, students are generally expected to remain at that agency for the entire academic year. If concerns arise, you should speak with your faculty practicum liaison, who will assess the situation. In rare cases—such as significant staff changes or other developments that negatively affect the learning environment—a student may be reassigned to a new placement, at the discretion of the faculty liaison.

Q: What about liability insurance for interns?

A: All students have intern liability insurance provided through a group policy with the General Administration of the University of North Carolina System. Coverage is \$2,000,000/\$4,000,000 for individual/aggregate claims. This insurance is paid through student fees and is required for each semester the student participates in practicum internship.

APPENDIX

North Carolina State University School of Social Work Technical Standards for Professional and Ethical Behavior

Introduction and Purpose

The School of Social Work at North Carolina State University is committed to supporting students as they prepare to become professional social workers. This document describes the Technical Standards for Professional and Ethical Behavior that all Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Master of Social Work (MSW) students must satisfy in order to participate in, and graduate from, the BSW or MSW program.

The School of Social Work is preparing students for careers as professional social workers and professional social workers are ethically obligated to protect the clients and communities we serve, based on the *National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics* (<https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>). Thus the School of Social Work has established student standards that emphasize the necessary skills, attributes, and competencies of a successful graduate of the program grounded in the code. The School of Social Work will hold students accountable for complying with these standards within the traditional classroom setting and in field placements.

Becoming a professional is a gradual process. The Technical Standards for Professional and Ethical Behavior articulate minimum expectations for students. If faculty or administrators believe a student is not meeting these standards, they may refer the student to the Student Affairs Committee for a review process described in the BSW/MSW handbooks.

Commitment to Non-Discrimination

NC State is a diverse community committed to being welcoming, inclusive and supportive for all people. The School of Social Work follows and affirms the University's Equal Opportunity, Non-Discrimination and Affirmative Action Policy, contained in [POL 04.25.05](#).

The Technical Standards outlined below address the following areas:

1. *General Requirements*
2. *Communication*
3. *General Standards of Professionalism*
4. *Self-awareness and Reflective Listening*
5. *Respect for Diversity and Social Justice*

6. *Ethical Conduct*

7. *Interpersonal Skills*

8. *Academic and Professional Standards*

Technical Standards

1. General Requirements

Students must meet the following requirements:

- attend and participate in classes and field placements per the expectations outlined in the syllabi and in accordance with the field setting and the Council on Social Work Education Core Competencies of Social Work Practice;
- navigate transportation to complete field and classroom requirements;
- use technology as required to engage in effective practice including, but not limited to, the use of computers, telephones, and agency databases;
- demonstrate the ability to acquire knowledge and process experiences to inform practice; and
- demonstrate the capacity to think critically and to apply effective problem-solving skills.

2. Communication

Students must meet the following requirements:

- express ideas and feelings clearly;
- demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills, including the ability to listen objectively and to interpret nonverbal communication;
- communicate responsibly and respectfully in all interactions with colleagues, faculty, field instructors, task supervisors, staff, clients, other professionals, and all others with whom they might come into contact in their student role;
- advocate for themselves in an appropriate and responsible manner that uses proper channels for conflict resolution, as outlined in the student handbooks.

3. General Standards of Professionalism

In accordance with the *NASW Code of Ethics* (§ 4.05), social work students should not allow their personal problems or issues to interfere with their judgment and performance or to jeopardize the best interests of people for whom they have professional responsibility. Social work students must exhibit and execute sound judgment and performance in the program to support the practice of social work. Students must meet the following standards:

- maintain respectful and professional relationships with colleagues, faculty, field instructors, task supervisors, staff, clients, and other professionals;
- seek appropriate help when personal issues interfere with professional and scholastic performance;
- manage stress effectively through self-care and by relying upon supportive relationships with colleagues, peers, and others; and
- integrate into practice constructive criticism received in both didactic and field settings.

4. Self-Awareness and Reflective Thinking

Students must meet the following requirements:

- demonstrate continual reflection on their own values, attitudes, beliefs, biases, emotions, past and current experiences, and the effects of these factors on their thinking, behavior, interactions, and relationships;
- demonstrate the capacity to continually reassess their own strengths, limitations, and suitability for professional practice;
- take responsibility for their own actions and consider the impact of these actions on others; and
- seek supervision and accept constructive feedback in a positive manner.

5. Respect for Diversity and Social Justice

Social work practice requires understanding, affirming, and respecting another individual's way of life and values. Per the *NASW Code of Ethics* (§ 1.05 and § 4.02), social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experience may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege and power. Students must meet the following requirements:

- demonstrate a willingness to examine their personal beliefs, values, and assumptions that perpetuate or counter oppression;
- strive to relate to, and to work nonjudgmentally with, others who differ from themselves, regardless of the person's age, class, color, culture, race or ethnicity, family structure, beliefs, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, ability, and/or value system;
- demonstrate knowledge of, and sensitivity to, diversity, oppression, and privilege;
- approach differences with an attitude of humility and respect, acknowledging the importance of cultural differences in shaping life experiences;
- demonstrate the ability to develop and strengthen cross-cultural proficiency

sufficient to work effectively with a wide variety of diverse groups and communities.

6. Ethical Conduct

Students are required to adhere to ethical conduct and decision-making consistent with the values, ethics, and standards formally established for the social work profession in the *NASW Code of Ethics*, and must abide by all applicable university policies, including the university's Code of Student Conduct. Students must meet the following requirements:

- demonstrate behavior and decisions reflecting the highest standards of honesty and personal and professional integrity;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries with colleagues, faculty, field instructors, task supervisors, staff, clients, and other professionals;
- understand their role in practice as learners and social work students, including correctly judging the limits of their own competence and seeking help from an appropriate source when necessary;
- follow federal and state laws and agency policies regarding confidentiality and mandatory reporting, including seeking permission from agency administrators for the use of agency materials, records, or audio-visual materials for academic coursework.

7. Interpersonal Skills

Students must meet the following requirements:

- demonstrate the ability to build rapport and work effectively with colleagues, faculty, field instructors, task supervisors, staff, clients, and other professionals;
- demonstrate the capacity to understand the experience and perspectives of individuals or groups and use this empathy as a basis for a productive relationship; and
- exhibit conflict resolution skills, including the ability to negotiate differing attitudes and opinions.

8. Academic and Professional Standards

Students must meet the following requirements:

- follow the policies, procedures, and operating standards of the NC State University School of Social Work and the field placement agency;
- show the capacity to successfully complete required field practicum hours and demonstrate positive progress in the required competencies and behavioral indicators in the field and classroom settings;

- maintain appearance, dress, and general demeanor appropriate to the context; and
- be punctual and dependable, prioritize responsibilities and manage time well, follow relevant attendance policies in class and field, observe deadlines, complete assignments on time, and conscientiously arrange and keep appointments.

I have read this document. I agree to abide by and demonstrate behavior consistent with these standards.

Student name (print) _____ Student ID _____

Student signature _____ Date _____