

University of Delaware

School Psychology Handbook: APPENDIX B

PRACTICUM GUIDELINES School Psychology Program Revised: February, 2010

Practica are integral and essential components of the school psychology training program. They provide opportunities for students to gather knowledge and skills most appropriately learned in the field and to demonstrate and refine their skills under supervision. Practica experiences are a direct extension of specific training activities. Although more limited than an internship in regard to the range of cases and problems to which students are exposed, practica challenge students to resolve individual, group, and system-level problems.

Practica requirements are consistent with the University's conceptual framework for teacher training, which emphasizes the critical dispositions of Scholar, Problem-Solver, and Partner. As such, practicum students are expected to work collaboratively with others across diverse populations as they promote positive educational and mental health practices. Students are expected to apply their skills to the resolution of individual, group, and system level problems.

CHARACTERISTICS AND GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- Specialist students are required to complete three practica, each comprising 3-credit hours. Doctoral students take an additional practicum during the fourth year of the program.
- At least two practicum replacements are to be in public school settings and are to take place during the school year. One other practicum may be completed during a summer session and/or in an approved non-public school setting. Past "specialized" settings have included: Delaware Autism Program, Sterk School (for students with hearing impairments), the Option Program (alternative program), Terry Children's Psychiatric Center, Meadowood (program for students with severe disabilities), and the College School (program for students with learning disabilities). Exceptions may be approved by the University's program coordinator and the practicum supervisor.
- Supervision is jointly shared with the on-site supervisor and the University practicum supervisor. However, principal responsibility for the student typically rests with the University supervisor.
- Practicum placements are made by faculty.
- At least 450 hours of combined practica experiences are required prior to the full-time internship (which occurs during the third year of the program). In practice, most

students attain far more than the minimum hours. Students are expected to be on-site for two full days a week during each semester of practicum.

- Up to 150 clock hours of practica may be waived for those students with previous experiences directly related to school psychological services. Decisions regarding the waiver of practicum hours must be approved by the student's advisor and the school psychology program coordinator and be based on the student's demonstration of skills expected of a student at the level of practicum to be waived.
- Supervision shall be provided by program faculty or other supervisory personnel who possess background, training, and credentials appropriate to the practicum experiences. As such, supervisors of school practica must be certified school psychologists. Supervision must be available to students in sufficient amounts of time (a minimum of two hours per week).
- In addition to the completion of field activities, students are required to participate in University class meetings held concurrently with their field placements. In these group supervision meetings designed to increase students' skills as reflective practitioners, students share and discuss field experiences, critique and discuss assigned readings and new instruments in school psychology, and complete other activities related to their practica experiences.
- Completion of all monitoring components of field experiences (i.e., the checklist, interim, and final reviews, etc.) is the responsibility of the student. *Failure to complete and return such forms to the University supervisor could result in a failing grade.*

IMPORTANT NOTES

- All local schools require that you present evidence of a recent PPD Tuberculin test before entering the schools. The test is valid for three years. Please give proof of your test results to your university supervisor before beginning your practicum, or you will not be allowed to complete the practicum. You may satisfy this requirement by presenting a signed note from (1) your family doctor, (2) a public health clinic, or (3) the student health center, which will perform the painless test at no charge. Contact the health center (831-2226) for hours of administration. Remember, you must return within 48 to 72 hours to have the test read.
- In addition to the PDD test, schools may require an FBI background check. Please inquire about whether this is a requirement of your school district with the University Supervisor prior to the start of the semester in order to expedite the process.
- It is recommended that students obtain professional liability insurance. Such insurance is relatively inexpensive for members of NASP (which students should join).

FIRST-YEAR PRACTICUM

150 clock hours (minimum)

Prior to the first practicum, students should have completed the following courses: EDUC 817 (Individual Intelligence Testing), EDUC 618 Introduction to School Psychology, EDUC 744 (Educational Measurement and Progress Monitoring), EDUC814 (Psychological Assessment), EDUC623 (Human Development) and EDUC 663 (Counseling Skills Lab). Concurrently with the first practicum, most students will be taking three other courses, including Consultation and Intervention: School Discipline (EDUC830) and Instructing Elementary/Middle Schoolers with Mild Disabilities (EDUC679). A major purpose of the first practicum is to orient students to the educational process and to give students the opportunity to practice diagnostic assessment skills.

In light of their limited prior experience in assessment, it is recommended that first-year practicum students be assigned to reevaluations, and not initial evaluations unless the cases appear to be simple. The number of assessments will depend largely on their comprehensiveness and the extent to which the student is engaged in other functions. However, students generally assume primary responsibility for 5-6 cases. It should be expected that first-year practicum students will require greater supervision than second-year students.

Objectives of First-year Practicum

- To practice skills obtained through course work in psychological and educational assessment -- i.e., planning the assessment based on the referral question; administration, scoring, and interpretation of standardized measures; observation; interviewing teachers, parents, and children; integrating assessment data; devising recommendations; and reporting assessment results.
- To become familiar with the typical operations of a school system, both formal and actual -- its functions, coordinations between parts, roles of various school personnel, etc.
- To become familiar with the functions of regular and special educational programs, alternative delivery systems, the variety of support services, and the roles professionals in the schools.
- To become familiar with programs offered throughout the school district and the community that may be of value to the school psychologist.
- To gain an understanding of, respect for, and responsiveness to, cultural diversity.
- To become familiar with the school's special education process, including the roles of student assistance team members in pre-referral, referral, assessment, intervention, and placement of children with disabilities.

Evaluation of Progress

Students should consult the practicum syllabus for detailed requirements. However, at a minimum, students will be evaluated using the *Field Experience Checklist and Evaluation Form* and their final assessment (process and report) will be evaluated using the *Assessment Rubrics*.

SECOND-YEAR PRACTICA

150 clock hours (minimum) each practicum

Two semesters of practicum are taken in the second year of the program. Students have now completed all assessment courses and should be able to apply assessment skills with minimal supervision. However, assessment skills will continue to be practiced and improved under supervision. Likewise, assistance in interpreting and presenting results to parents, teachers, etc. will be necessary. In addition to assessment, the practicum student should devote ample attention to linking assessment to intervention. Thus, learning and practicing direct and indirect interventions are now expected. Students are expected to serve as active problem-solvers working in partnership with other professionals at their practicum site.

During the first semester of the second year (concurrent with the Advanced Counseling Techniques course), the focus is on direct intervention with children and adolescents. Practicum meetings will include individual and group supervision (including video and audiotape) as well as study of counseling theory.

During the second semester (concurrent with the Consultation and Intervention: Mental Health and Diversity and Family School Collaboration courses), greater focus is on indirect interventions with students through work with teachers and parents.

Objectives of Second-year Practica

The objectives for second-year practica include those previously listed for the first-year practicum, plus the following:

- To practice skills obtained through course work in consultation and intervention -- e.g., consultations with teachers and other staff members regarding recommendations for children, the design, implementation, and evaluation of specific interventions, etc.
- To practice skills obtained through course work in other areas of training, including research, evaluation, and counseling -- e.g., provide staff members with a review and summary of research on a timely topic, design simple procedures to evaluate intervention programs for individual or small groups of students, organize and lead a social skills group, provide child and parent counseling under supervision, etc.

Evaluation of Progress

Student progress will be assessed using the [Field Experience Checklist and Evaluation Form](#) during both second year practica. In addition, the *Assessment Rubric* ([Appendix E](#)) will be applied informally to all assessment reports and formally at least once each semester. Students will submit a minimum of one counseling case (video and class notes) during the fall semester for evaluation using the *Counseling Rubric* ([Appendix E](#)). Students will submit a minimum of one consultation case (video and case notes) during the spring semester for evaluation using the *Consultation Rubric* ([Appendix E](#)).

GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS AND GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICA

1. The student will conform to the standards and policies of the local school district or clinic, and of the State of Delaware, and will strive to uphold ethical standards of the profession in the course of the training experience. Students are expected to know the ethical standards of the National Association of School Psychologists and abide by them in their field placements. Lapses in ethical and/or professional behavior may result in a failing grade, regardless of the quality of the remainder of a student's work.
2. The individual school district, or clinic, will determine what specific procedures to follow in obtaining consent from parents and/or children when the practicum student is involved in a case as observer or service provider. However, consent from parents is required for all cases for which the practicum student has primary responsibility.
3. Students are expected to protect the confidentiality of their clients at all times. It is essential that all test protocols, reports, documents, video and audio tapes that are used for training purposes at the University of Delaware be treated as confidential. Students will insure that all documents are protected while in their possession and properly filed with the school division when the case is completed. All video and audio tapes should be erased at the end of each semester.
4. The administration of personality tests or other types of measures specifically for training purposes may require special consent procedures. Furthermore, diagnostic decisions should never be based on tests administered specifically for practice, unless validity and reliability are attested to by the supervisor.
5. Psychological reports and other formal documents prepared by the student for the school district, or clinic, must be countersigned by both the on-site supervisor and the University supervisor, who in doing so, indicate that the work is acceptable. Students should sign work as "School Psychology Trainee," or "Practicum Student in School Psychology."
6. The on-site supervisor will meet with the student a minimum of two hours a week to plan and supervise training experiences. Three special sessions are to be arranged, as described later -- one at the beginning of the semester for initial planning, one at mid-semester for

interim evaluation and feedback, and one at the end of the semester for final evaluation and feedback. The university supervisor will visit the site as needed.

7. The on-site supervisor should determine the level of direct involvement and of independence that is appropriate for the student and for the space provided. That is, the supervisor should assign activities at a level consistent with the competencies demonstrated by the student. A hierarchy of activities involving a particular skill might be devised, as in the examples below, so that an assignment may be matched to the student's expertise. The examples below pertain to all first-year practicum students and many second-year practicum students.

Example 1. Administration of a standardized test not previously given by the student

- a. Student observes administration by supervisor.
- b. In response to questions by supervisor, student tells how he/she would administer a given subtest or respond to a given behavior.
- c. Student administers test to supervisor as simulation.
- d. Student administers test to child, observed by or taped for supervisor.
- e. Student administers test to child, summarizes in supervision.
- f. Student administers test to child; supervisor reviews test protocol and written report for points pertaining to administration.

Example 2. Teacher Interview

- a. Student observes interview by supervisor, shares impressions afterwards.
- b. Given details of a case, student outlines what he/she would ask about and how.
- c. Student role plays interview with supervisor.
- d. Student and supervisor interview teacher together.
- e. Student conducts interview, is observed or taped for supervision.
- f. Student conducts interview, reviews point by point (from extensive notes taken immediately afterwards) in supervision.
- g. Student conducts interview, reviews key point and general outcome in supervision.

Example 3. Classroom observation

- a. Student and supervisor discuss observational methods (including required form, when appropriate), and goals of observation.
- b. Student is introduced to teacher and observation session(s) is scheduled.
- c. Supervisor and student observe child and record observations.
- d. Supervisor and student review, compare, and discuss observations.
- e. Steps above are repeated, with student being the primary recorder of observations.
- f. Student conducts observations and reviews findings.

Obviously (or hopefully!), not all activities will necessitate this type of attention from the supervisor.

DRESS CODE

Area school districts and early learning facilities require those working in their buildings to dress professionally. Here is an example of the guidelines used by a local district. Please follow these guidelines. As adults in the school building you will be modeling appropriate attire for the students.

- Professional attire includes: dresses, skirts (no more than 3" above the knee), blouses, polo shirts, sweaters, jackets, pant suits, suits, blazers, dress slacks/khakis, shirt and tie, leather or suede shoes or dress sandals.
- Unprofessional attire includes items such as: leggings; stretch pants; stirrup pants; spandex pants; denim jeans of any color; athletic wear such as sweat pants or sweat shirts; shorts; tank tops; t-shirts; bare midriiffs; halter tops; short skirts; clothes with holes; clothes that depict images or texts; leisure sandals (such as flip flops and thongs); sneakers; clothing that reveals one's stomach, private areas or, or underwear- either when standing or kneeling/bending over or stretching; and see-through shirts or skirts.
- To signify that you are in a school building legitimately, schools require you to wear their id tags at all times.

Since students are forbidden to chew gum it is a good idea to refrain from gum chewing while on school property.

FORMAL STRUCTURE OF PRACTICA

Prospective field placement experiences and specific outcome-based competencies are outlined on the *Field Experience Checklist and Evaluation Form*. This document serves as a systematic planning and evaluation tool for monitoring student progress throughout the program. In the first practicum, the student may have little or no experience in the "Linking Assessment to Intervention" category. In subsequent semesters, this area should receive substantial attention.

Structure and accountability are also introduced through the arrangements described below. Note that **asterisks** indicate that something is to be written or prepared (these requirements are summarized at the end of this document). Also note that the student is required to maintain an ongoing log of activities and time spent during practica.

A. Initial Planning

Use the [Field Experience Checklist](#) to help structure an initial meeting in which:

1. Student describes past experience and expertise relevant to school psychology services.

*2. Supervisor and student plan field experiences for the semester using the *Field Experience Checklist*. Student will give a copy of this plan to the University supervisor.

B. Interim Evaluation and Review with Supervisor

Supervisor and student are to meet during the middle of the semester to review progress to date and to plan for the remainder of the semester.

1. Supervisor completes the second column (i.e., evaluation column) of a copy of the *Field Experience Checklist and Evaluation Form* that was completed earlier for planning purposes. This is for interim feedback to the student, and is not submitted to the university.
2. Student and supervisor review *Field Experience Checklist and Evaluation Form* and identify those areas of need or of special interest in which future experiences can be arranged. Make specific plans for these activities at this time.
3. Student indicates what aspects of supervision have been most valuable for him/her, and suggests ways in which supervision could be made more valuable.
- *4. Student writes up a brief progress report that summarizes the key points and plans discussed in this meeting, including (a) areas in need of improvement, and (b) special experiences or interests that the student will be pursuing in the remainder of the semester. The report is co-signed by the student and supervisor and given to the University supervisor.

C. Final Supervisor's Evaluation

1. Using the original [Field Experience Checklist and Evaluation Form](#) (Appendix A) that was completed at the beginning of the semester, the supervisor completes the second column and reviews his/her final evaluation with the student.
- *2. Student indicates on form whether he/she disagrees with any points in the evaluation, and signs form. Student returns form to University supervisor.
- *3. Student completes [Site Evaluation Form](#) and submits it to the university supervisor.

*D. Ongoing Log of Experiences

The student must maintain a daily log of practicum experiences. Be certain to document required supervision time. Entries into the log should summarize experiences and include:

- date and time spent
- brief description of tasks performed
- characteristics of case(s) (age, type of disability, behaviors)
- assessments and/or interventions used

For example, "Sept. 15. Observed a third-grade TAM classroom, completed re-evaluation of a second-grade African-American student suspected of LD (WISC-IV, WIAT-II, CBA); teacher

concerned about reading problems. Met with supervisor for 1 hour to review cases. Wrote report. 7 hours."

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

1. All reports must be approved by both the on-site and the University supervisor. Obviously, this will require some coordination and expediency on your part. Be sure you understand your supervisors' expectations regarding timelines, who reviews reports first, and other logistical details. If the two supervisors disagree, the on-site supervisor has the last word (unless, of course, an ethical violation exists). Disagreements over diagnostic decisions, preferred measures and interventions, report-writing styles, etc., should be expected. Such experiences represent reality in the field and are often educationally rewarding. Whenever these disagreements occur, however, defer final judgment to the on-site supervisor who is assuming responsibility for the case.

2. Consult the *Assessment, Counseling, and Consultation Rubrics* to guide your work.

3. Make sure that the University supervisor promptly receives a copy of your initial practicum plan, interim report, final evaluation, and log.

4. Attending practicum as scheduled is a high priority (in most cases, you should consider completing practicum requirements your highest priority). If on rare occasions you must change your schedule, inform your on-site supervisor and the school secretary. If you are sick and cannot attend a scheduled meeting that requires your participation, then it is your responsibility to insure that all parties involved in the meeting are notified and that other arrangements are made, when necessary (e.g., your supervisor might need your written report).

5. Treat this as your first job in school psychology! Impress upon your supervisors and co-workers that you are an energetic and responsible person who desires to learn and help. Dress and behave as a professional at all times. Introduce yourself to the staff and students, particularly to those with whom you will be spending the most time. Familiarize yourself with their concerns, interests, needs, etc. These suggestions might seem trite, but concerns about students' tardiness, late reports, not calling in when sick, unfriendliness, etc. are voiced almost every year by supervisors.

6. Don't always wait to be told what to do. **Be proactive.** That is, you should never have nothing to do. Don't expect your supervisor to schedule your entire day - supervisors are very busy people. Whenever you are not involved in a case, arrange for other learning experiences, such as:

- Review special education guidelines and procedures.
- Observe, and compare, regular and special education classrooms.
- Interact with kids (read a book to kindergartners, play ball with elementary kids at recess,

talk to students, etc.).

-- Talk to other professionals (e.g., reading specialist, nurse, counselor, educational diagnostician, etc.) about their roles.

7. Use your time wisely! Start the habit now of scheduling your day. Always arrive early and before classes begin. Use this time to schedule sessions for testing, consultation, counseling, classroom observations, etc. Teachers like to know in advance when a child has to leave the classroom or when someone is going to visit their classroom. Also, they do not like class interruptions. Respect this (and if it can't be avoided, apologize profusely). Plan accordingly and accommodate the scheduling preferences of teachers (if you and the teacher cannot agree on a time, see your supervisor).

8. Always let the school secretary know when you enter and leave the building. Check to see if you need to sign-in and sign-out.

9. Maintain a file (e.g., notebook binder) of ideas, references, resources, recommendations, policies, etc.

Grading

Determination of the final grade for each practicum is the responsibility of the University supervisor. The grade is determined in consultation with the on-site supervisor and reflects the degree to which the student has achieved competency in skills on the *Field Experience Checklist* and the appropriate rubrics. Expectations will increase with each practicum. A student with "unsatisfactory" performance in any competency (including professional characteristics) during the third practicum will not be allowed to begin an internship. See each semester's course syllabus for additional details.

Summary of Planning and Evaluation Procedures

Week 1 or 2. Supervisor and student jointly complete *Field Experience Checklist and Evaluation Form (FECEF)*.

Student forwards one copy to university supervisor, makes one copy for interim evaluation, and keeps original for final evaluation.

Mid-semester. Student asks Supervisor to complete the evaluation component (i.e., second column of checklist) of a copy of the *FECEF* that was completed previously, modifies planned activities (if appropriate), and shares results with student.

Student submits brief progress report to university supervisor.

End of semester. Student asks Supervisor to complete evaluation component of the original *FECEF* (with modifications in planned activities, if appropriate) and forwards the form to the university supervisor.

Student submits copy of Practicum Log to university supervisor.

Student submits complete Site Evaluation to university supervisor.