

HANDBOOK

**PRACTICUM IN HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT & FAMILY STUDIES
(HDFS 44092/54092) AND PRACTICUM IN
GERONTOLOGY (GERO 44092)**



**SCHOOL OF LIFESPAN DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATIONAL
SCIENCES**

WHAT IS A PRACTICUM/INTERNSHIP?

Practicums/Internships are the bridge between academia and the professional world. They provide students with an opportunity to gain professional skills that will enhance marketability upon graduation from college. The word internship refers to a short-term work experience when a student participates in a program of temporary, supervised work in a particular field in order to gain practical experience. It incorporates education and professional development and is designed to guide the intern toward a professional career in a particular organization, field, or sector. The word practicum refers to a course involving activities emphasizing the practical application of theory, especially one in which a student gains on-the-job experience in a field of study (Webster's New World College Dictionary, 5th Ed.).

In an internship or practicum, the student becomes part of an organization. An organization provides a learning laboratory where students experience the working world. Through observation and reflection of what occurs in the organizational setting, the student may discover how academic interests relate to possible careers, gain meaningful on-the-job experience and training, and connect classroom theory to real-world practice. Students contribute to the organization by performing meaningful projects and assignments that are of continuing value to both parties.

In the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Kent State University, the purpose of the practicum/internship experience is to provide students with an opportunity to work in a human service/gerontology/nonprofit organization. The goals of the practicum/internship class include:

1. Acquainting students with organizations that provide services to individuals, families and older adults, as well as the wide variety of organizations served by the nonprofit sector.
2. Providing situations that require application of academic theory to actual situations.
3. Developing interpersonal skills needed to work with clients as well as individuals employed by the organization.
4. Providing knowledge about career possibilities for HDFS and GERO majors and students pursuing Nonprofit Studies.

In addition, the student provides a service to the organization while expanding his/her personal and professional knowledge.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE PRACTICUM/INTERNSHIP

In the practicum/internship setting, there are three major participants: the practicum/internship student, the cooperating organization supervisor, and the university faculty supervisor. The student will be placed in a practicum/internship setting to meet educational and professional goals unique to the student's human service and/or nonprofit career focus. The cooperating organization supervisor serves as a mentor and a guide for the student. The university faculty

supervisor coordinates, collaborates, advises, and evaluates the practicum/internship experience. The organization and the university collaborate to make the practicum/internship experience both challenging and successful for the student. Each participant in the practicum/internship experience has unique roles and responsibilities. The following pages describe the diverse parameters of each of these participants and their roles during the practicum/internship.

OBJECTIVES – PRACTICUM/INTERNSHIP

The Practicum/Internship will provide the student with an opportunity:

To obtain a meaningful experience in a profession related to Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS), Gerontology (GERO), or Nonprofit Studies (NPST) prior to graduation.

To apply knowledge and theory learned in an academic setting to actual situations in a field-based setting.

To provide feedback regarding the relevance of the HDFS, GERO, and NPST curriculum to the field-based setting.

To develop relationships and interact with experienced professionals.

To develop or enhance professional skills under the simultaneous guidance of a related organization supervisor, and a faculty supervisor.

The Practicum/Internship will provide the cooperating organization with an opportunity:

To assume an instrumental role in the educational preparation of aspiring professionals.

To assess prospective candidates for possible future employment. To maintain contact with University faculty for the purpose of relating current academic theory to practical situations.

To stimulate professional staff interest in continuing education and in-service training programs.

To implement programs for which they have not previously had staff expertise.

The Practicum/Internship will provide the Kent State University Human Development and Family Studies, Gerontology, and Nonprofit Studies faculty with an opportunity:

To provide a field-based experience for students to utilize knowledge and theory while actively participating in the profession.

To evaluate the student's professional capabilities.

To promote the ongoing student evaluation of the HDFS, GERO and NPST curriculum.

THE ROLE OF THE FACULTY SUPERVISOR

The faculty supervisor is responsible for teaching, coordinating, advising, supervising, and evaluating the university program. The faculty supervisor makes suggestions, challenges, and supports the professional development of the student. The faculty supervisor maintains communication between the organization supervisor and student, making sure that each participant is clear in goals and experiential criteria for learning in the program. The faculty supervisor performs all of the following functions.

1. **Designing the Practicum/Internship** – This includes:
 - A. Assisting the student to determine goals.
 - B. Supervising and monitoring of the practicum/internship experience.
 - C. Developing and initiating procedures for evaluation.
2. **Determining Academic Credit for the Practicum/Internship** – The practicum/internship may be taken for a total of 3-6 credit hours. Please refer to the table below:

Fall and Spring Semester

Credit Hours	Class Meeting	Weekly Field Hours	Total Field Hours
3	6 times per semester or online	14	210
4	6 times per semester or online	21	315
5	6 times per semester or online	28	420
6	6 times per semester or online	35	525

Summer Session II

Credit Hours	Class Meeting	Weekly Field Hours	Total Field Hours
3	Online	26.25	210
4	Online	39.50	315

Students who complete their internship/practicum during the summer will complete the same number of hours as those who take it during the academic year. The Practicum course is offered during Summer Session II. Internship/practicum hours need to be completed by the last day of the session.

3. **Placement and Supervision of Students** – Placement considerations include the student's professional goals, motivation, maturity, ability, available transportation, academic record and experience. The faculty supervisor will be available to discuss appropriate organization placements. It is recommended that the student follow up with three or more interviews, taking a resume to share with potential organization supervisors. The degree of supervision will vary from student to student, but the faculty supervisor is accessible to each student on an ongoing basis.
4. **Maintain Organization Relations** – The various participants in the practicum/internship are partners in learning. The faculty supervisor develops and maintains this partnership through communication, and mediation, when necessary.
5. **Evaluating the Student** – Initiative is taken by the faculty supervisor to provide evaluation criteria for each student's progress. Completing homework assignments, class attendance/ participation and writing a reflection paper will be among the requirements for completing the class. Midterm and a final evaluation forms will be sent electronically to the organization supervisor who will be asked to provide information that will be considered in determining the student's grade.

THE ROLE OF THE ORGANIZATION SUPERVISOR

The organization supervisor serves as a mentor, guide, educator, and resource professional for the student in the practicum/internship experience. The organization supervisor must integrate the educational needs of the student with the learning experiences possible within the organization setting. The organization supervisor's role includes the following:

1. **Planning** – The student's practicum/internship position assignments and other projects should be carefully defined, and all parties should have a clear understanding of expectations in terms of productivity and educational growth. The Practicum/Internship Agreement and syllabus indicate these assignments and position requirements.
2. **Participate in recruitment and selection** – The organization supervisor interviews potential practicum/internship students and plans their participation based upon organization policy and university guidelines. Placement requires clear goals and job descriptions as well as timelines for meeting assignments throughout the semester.
3. **Orientation** – The organization supervisor should give the student information about the mission, procedures, and services of the organization as well as its culture. Any specific obligations that the student must meet prior to beginning practicum/internship should be explained (i.e., fingerprinting, liability insurance, safety, training,

background checks, physical exam, or tuberculosis screening). The supervisor assists the student in planning goals and objectives for the term as well as re-evaluating these goals during the practicum/internship experience. The supervisor ascertains that the student will engage in activities for which they are qualified (i.e., student will not participate in activities that require state licensure that the student does not possess). The supervisor clearly explains to the student that they will not be at the site unless organization employees are also present. If home visits are required, explain to the student that visits are to be supervised. A student who has been asked to conduct an offsite visit by themselves can only do so after communicating with the practicum instructor. Students are not to drive clients in their own vehicle or drive clients in a vehicle owned by the organization unless an employee from the organization is also in the car.

4. **Scheduling and assignment** – The organization supervisor assists students with assignments, time and activity reports, dates for orientation and training, and other deadlines and professional responsibilities.
5. **Modeling** – The supervisor becomes part of the student’s image of what it means to serve as a human service/nonprofit professional. Often the interpersonal relations and support that develops between an organization supervisor and a student are significant to the student’s self-confidence and skill development. The organization supervisor can support the student by sharing professional development activities and interests.
6. **Understand characteristics of students** – Organization supervisors serve as mentors of students. An understanding of characteristics of undergraduate and graduate students may support mutual respect, understanding, and appreciation between supervisor and student:
 - A. In general, students are available for one term only. Tasks assigned must be possible to accomplish within the time limits of the practicum/internship agreement and the term assignments for the class.
 - B. Students are oriented toward impact. They often desire to “make a difference” in the lives of clients. This zeal can serve as a strong motivational force for the student; however, students need to be cautioned about moving too fast within parameters of organization protocol and client needs and goals.
 - C. Students are novice professionals. They may be naïve or idealistic about procedures and protocol. They need clear guidelines for behavior and standards. They need regular meetings with supervisors to process their ideas, perceptions, feelings and questions.
 - D. Students need open lines of communication. They need to be told that their initiative is valued. Realistic explanations and feedback, as well as regular meetings with their supervisor, help in dealing with these issues. Any conflicts that may arise need to be addressed in a timely and appropriate manner.

- E. Students have educational as well as service goals during the practicum/internship. They need to be challenged to read, analyze, and explore during the practicum/internship experience in order to understand the implications of organization programs and procedures. New goals and assignments may need to be added to encourage and challenge in the professional experience.
 - F. Students need to recognize strengths as well as limitations in setting realistic goals for the practicum/internship.
7. **Evaluation of student performance** – The organization supervisor will be asked to complete a written evaluation of the student's progress at midterm and at the end of the semester. Forms for this will be provided by the faculty supervisor via email, and the evaluation will be considered in determining the student's final grade. Areas of concern should be identified and reported to the university faculty supervisor so that there is time for the student to develop appropriate skills.

THE ROLE OF THE PRACTICUM/INTERNSHIP STUDENT

The practicum/internship is a professional experience that introduces the student to the human service/gerontology/nonprofit field. This experience can contribute to the student's knowledge, develop skills, and provide awareness of personal and career strengths or limitations. It provides the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the organization, develop professional skills, acquire a greater understanding of the responsibilities of human service/gerontology/nonprofit professionals at the selected organization, and provide opportunities to network with other professionals. Moreover, a practicum/internship experience enables the student to decide whether the organization provides the type of career opportunities the student wants.

The student's role includes:

1. Developing goals and objectives with the university and organization supervisor that will guide the practicum/internship experience.
2. Abiding by the policies and regulations of the organization including meeting the requirements for organization personnel, maintaining confidentiality, and acting in an ethical manner. Abiding the law (i.e., engaging in activities for which a license is not required).
3. Developing an understanding of the duties/responsibilities of organization employees.
4. Maintaining professional boundaries when interacting with clients and organization staff.
5. Recognizing the limits of the student's professional skills and seeking help from the organization or faculty supervisors when those limits are met.
6. Keeping both the faculty and university supervisors informed of interactions with clients and practicum/internship responsibilities.

7. Communicating in a professional manner with clients, organization personnel, and the university supervisor. This includes all oral and written interaction.
8. Maintaining safety protocols by only conducting off-site visits with supervision unless prior arrangements have been made with the university practicum supervisor. Having a clear understanding that a supervisor must be present if a student is driving a client in a car that is owned by the organization.

Demonstrating initiative as well as completing organization and class assignments in accord with deadlines. This includes completing the appropriate paperwork prior to the beginning of the internship/ practicum. The student is responsible for finding an organization placement as well as securing transportation to and from the organization. The Practicum Agreement and Dismissal Policy Form must be completed, signed by the student and the direct supervisor and submitted to the instructor. The forms can be returned to the instructor via Campus Mail, by scanning the document and sending it as an attachment via email, U.S. Mail, (P.O. Box 5190, Kent, OH 44240) or by delivering the form to the instructor. Forms must be completed and submitted by the deadline that is listed below:

Fall Semester
Spring Semester
Summer Session II

June 30th
November 30th
April 30th

If paperwork has not been received by the deadline, the student may be de-registered from the class unless external unforeseen circumstances exist. It is imperative that ongoing communication exists between the student and the instructor for the necessary arrangements to be made prior to the beginning of the internship/practicum.

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