

# THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



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## PRACTICUM MANUAL ACADEMIC YEAR 2009-2010

The School of Social Work is a program of the College of Arts and Sciences at the  
University of Oklahoma

# **PRACTICUM MANUAL**

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The appendix to this Manual contains the documents listed below and can be found on the Practicum webpage.

### **Practicum Course Syllabi**

**Undergraduate SWK 4315/4325**

**MSW Foundation Year SWK 5413/5423**

**MSW Concentration Year SWK 5820**

### **Quick Reference on Employment-based Practicum Placements (EBPP)**

**Application Checklist for NORMAN Students**

**Application Checklist for TULSA Students**

**Medical Site Requirement Checklist**

**Possible Site-Specific Requirements**

**Submitting Paperwork through D2L: for Tulsa students only**

**Setting up an Affiliation Agreement with the OUSSW**

**University of Oklahoma Student Code excerpt from the 2006-2008 General Catalog**

Forms to be used in this academic year are available on the website at [www.ou.edu/socialwork](http://www.ou.edu/socialwork). Click on Practicum and go to the section entitled Practicum Forms.

## INTRODUCTION

Field practicum is the cornerstone of social work education and provides social work students with the opportunity to put classroom learning into practice. Through joint efforts of the faculty on both Norman and Tulsa campuses of the University of Oklahoma School of Social Work (OUSSW) and social workers in practice across the state, the Practicum Program offers field placements that provide the structure, supervision and resources for appropriate learning. By working together, the OUSSW and the social work community help students become professional practitioners and build statewide capacity to provide vital social work services to vulnerable populations.

The Practicum Manual is designed to guide the field experience for students, practicum instructors, practicum sites, faculty, and administrators who are affiliated with the OUSSW. The Manual contains all policies, guidelines, and procedures to be followed in the Practicum Program for the current academic year. This year, we once again made changes in the Manual contents, although these changes are not as extensive as those made in the previous years. The Manual is available in PDF format on the Practicum Program webpage at [www.ou.edu/socialwork](http://www.ou.edu/socialwork).

As always, I extend my sincere appreciation to the practicum instructors and other agency personnel who year-after-year demonstrate remarkable dedication to our students and to the OUSSW. The expertise and professional commitment of the some 250 social workers who function as practicum instructors is truly humbling, and without their commitment and that of well over 300 practicum sites, we would not be able to provide appropriate education for our students. Please remember that we encourage comments and ideas from instructors and sites and do our best to incorporate those recommendations.

Finally, I thank our students for their commitment to the profession of social work and to their own development as social work practitioners. Practicum students provide critical services to the community while engaged in the educational experience the practicum affords. By all working together, the efforts of students, faculty, and community continue to insure the delivery of high quality social services to people in need.

Ellen Wisdom, ACSW, LCSW  
Coordinator of Field Practicum Programs  
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August, 2008

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## **SECTION A: PRACTICUM PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### **THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA AND THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

Created by the Oklahoma Territorial Legislature in 1890, the University of Oklahoma is a doctoral degree-granting research university serving the educational, cultural, and economic needs of the state, region, and nation. The University has an historic commitment to social work education. The first social work courses at the University of Oklahoma were offered in the Department of Sociology in 1917, just ten years after statehood, and the School of Social Work was established 18 years later in 1935. The University of Oklahoma School of Social Work (OUSSW) has been continuously accredited since accreditation of social work programs in higher education became possible, first by the American Association of Schools of Social Work and later by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

The MSW program at the OUSSW, offered both in Norman and Tulsa, is the only MSW program in the state. The baccalaureate program is offered in Norman and is one of five accredited baccalaureate programs in Oklahoma. The OUSSW is a program of the University of Oklahoma College of Arts and Sciences.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the University of Oklahoma is to provide the best possible educational experience for our students through excellence in teaching, research, and creative activity and through service to the state and society.

The OUSSW, through its programs of professional education, research, and public service, is dedicated to the enhancement of human well-being and to the alleviation of poverty and oppression. The OUSSW achieves its mission through the preparation of skilled social work practitioners committed to practice with persons who are poor and oppressed, the development and improvement of social service programs, and the promotion of professionalism in social work in Oklahoma.

### **THE ROLE OF FIELD PRACTICUM IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

Field education or Practicum is the cornerstone of social work education and allows social work students to put classroom learning into practice. Located on campuses in Norman and Tulsa, the OUSSW works with well over 300 affiliated agencies and facilities across Oklahoma to offer social work students direct learning experiences with individuals, families, groups, and communities. On-site social work field education is provided by practicum instructors who are employees of the practicum site and serve in a mentoring role for students. Regular and adjunct faculty assigned to the Practicum Program serve as liaison faculty and work with sites and instructors to insure high quality experiences for both undergraduate and graduate students.

In all accredited programs in social work, field education is a major part of the curriculum. At the University of Oklahoma, students in social work earn more of their credit hours in field education than in any other curricular area. Five different practicum courses are offered. Undergraduate seniors enroll in SWK 4315 followed by SWK 4325. Foundation year MSW students enroll in SWK 5413 followed by SWK 5423. Concentration year MSW students complete their studies with SWK 5820.

Practicum courses from other departments or programs outside the OUSSW may not be applied to a social work degree unless the coursework has been earned at another CSWE accredited program in social work. Prior employment or life experience may not be credited toward practicum requirements.

Expectations of field education from CSWE are outlined in the statement below from the Education Policy and Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education:

*Field education is an integral component of social work education anchored in the mission, goals, and educational level of the program. It occurs in settings that reinforce students' identification with the purposes, values, and ethics of the profession; fosters the integration of empirical and practice-based knowledge; and promotes the development of professional competence. Field education is systematically designed, supervised, and evaluated on the basis of criteria by which students demonstrate the achievement of program objectives.*

The OUSSW Practicum Program is coordinated through the Practicum Office on the Norman campus with additional faculty and staff assigned to the program in Tulsa. For more information, see the website at [www.ou.edu/socialwork/practicum](http://www.ou.edu/socialwork/practicum).

## **GLOSSARY OF FIELD PRACTICUM TERMINOLOGY**

**Coordinator of Field Practicum Programs:** The faculty member who has overall responsibility for the Practicum Program at the OUSSW and also serves as Practicum Coordinator for programs on the Norman campus.

**Practicum Coordinator:** The faculty member who is responsible for the Practicum Program on either the Norman or Tulsa campus. All placements must be approved by the Practicum Coordinator on the individual student's campus.

**Practicum Liaison Faculty or Faculty Liaison:** The faculty member who oversees the student's experience in Practicum, visits the student at the placement site, serves as the instructor of record, and awards the student's grade.

**Practicum Instructor:** The social worker who provides on-site supervision at the practicum site. Usually, the practicum instructor is an employee of the site. All MSW students must be assigned to a practicum instructor who has an MSW. BSW students may be assigned to a practicum instructor with either an MSW or BSW. Each student must meet with his or her

practicum instructor for at least one hour of supervision weekly. The practicum instructor participates in evaluation of the student's performance and recommends a grade.

**Practicum Preceptor:** Some sites elect to assign a Preceptor. A Preceptor is a site employee who provides some daily guidance for the student. Generally, a preceptor does not qualify as a Practicum Instructor. In some cases, site administration decides to delegate the official role of instructor to one MSW employee who then assigns preceptorship to another MSW but retains the overall responsibility for the student's practicum experience.

**Practicum Agency or Facility or Site:** The agency or facility where students are placed for practicum is an affiliated practicum site. All sites must have a legal written affiliation agreement with the OUSSW. Sites may include hospitals, schools, social service agencies, and correctional facilities as well as community-based agencies and programs. Most sites are private non-profit agencies, public agencies, or hospitals.

**Concurrent Placement:** A placement that occurs during the same semester as classroom coursework. Generally students in a concurrent placement spend 18-24 hours at their practicum site each week.

**Block Placement:** A placement that occurs during a semester in which students take little or no classroom work and spend 36-38 hours per week at the placement.

**Extended Placement:** A placement that spans two semesters, spring and summer, in which the student takes little classroom work and spends 18-24 hours per week at the practicum site.

**Modified Placement:** A placement scheduled outside the bounds of the official Practicum semester, i.e. starting early and/or ending late.

## **SECTION B: PRACTICUM GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES**

### **PRACTICUM CALENDAR**

Practicum Calendars specific to Norman and Tulsa are developed each academic year for all levels of students in practicum. Calendars contain all relevant dates. Students are expected to follow the practicum calendar as published unless specific alternative arrangements have been made in advance and approved in writing by the Practicum Coordinator on the individual student's campus. Practicum Calendars are available on the Practicum webpage.

### **HOURS OF FIELD EXPERIENCE REQUIRED**

**Undergraduate social work majors** enroll in practicum courses during both semesters of their senior year. They must accumulate 300 hours in their practicum each of these two semesters for a total of 600 clock hours. Undergraduates earn a total of 10 credit hours for their two practicum courses (SWK 4315 and SWK 4325) and spend 20-24 hours each week in the field.

Undergraduate students must take their practicum coursework concurrently with coursework in order to fulfill co-requisites. Field Practicum is open only to senior social work majors.

**Foundation year MSW students** have several options to consider when planning their practicum coursework (SWK 5413 and SWK 5423). Foundation year practicum courses are offered during the fall and spring semester concurrently with other coursework and during the summer in a block practicum format.

The standard practicum option for full-time foundation year MSW students is enrollment in foundation year practicum courses during their first fall and spring semesters in the program. The student may, for personal or educational reasons, defer the foundation year practicum until the summer after the first year of study, provided he or she has the approval of the Practicum Coordinator on the student's campus.

The standard option for part-time foundation year MSW students is enrollment in foundation year practicum courses during the summer after completing all foundation year classroom work. The student may, for personal or educational reasons, consider the following two alternative options: 1) take the foundation year practicum courses during fall and spring of the second year in the program thereby completing the practicum concurrently with remaining foundation year classroom work; 2) wait until all foundation year classroom work has been completed and take the two foundation year practicum courses the following fall and spring semesters. Any such deviation from the standard option must have the approval of the Practicum Coordinator on the student's campus.

Foundation year students must accumulate 460 hours in their practicum and earn a total of 6 credit hours in practicum (SWK 5413 and SWK 5423). To complete a concurrent practicum, foundation year MSW students spend from 18-20 hours each week in the field during fall and

spring semesters. To complete a block practicum, foundation year MSW students spend 38-40 hours each week in the field during the summer.

**Concentration year MSW students** choose their concentration during the last semester of foundation year graduate study. Advanced Standing students specify their preference in their application to the program. Students preparing for concentration year study may elect either Direct Practice or Administration and Community Practice. Practicum assignments for the concentration year are specific to the area of concentration and provide students the opportunity to develop concentration-specific skills.

Concentration year students must accumulate 550 hours in their practicum. Students in the concentration year may complete the practicum in one of two ways: 1) in a block during the spring semester spending 36 hours each week in practicum and earning all 12 credit hours required, or 2) over spring and summer semesters, enrolling in 6 credit hours each semester and completing 18-20 hours per week in practicum.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION ON HOURS**

The practicum is an educational experience designed to unfold over an extended period of time and is so structured to protect the educational integrity of the practicum experience. All students must complete the hours per week expected for their specific practicum course and accumulate the total number of hours in the field required by that course. No student may start practicum early or accumulate excessive hours during any practicum week in order to end the practicum early, decrease the total number of weeks, or stockpile hours in case of a future shortage.

If during the practicum semester a student misses more than two days of practicum, he or she must contact his or her faculty liaison and work with the liaison and the practicum instructor on a plan to make up missed time. If for some unavoidable reason a student is not able to accumulate the required hours within the semester but is otherwise making satisfactory progress, the faculty liaison, in consultation with the practicum instructor, may award the student the grade of Incomplete and assist the student with a plan to make up the time before the start of the new semester. Any such plan must be acceptable to and approved by the site, practicum instructor, faculty liaison, and Practicum Coordinator. For information on absences and holidays, see Section D of this Manual.

## **PRACTICUM PLACEMENT HOURS**

Although most sites are in operation between 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M., Monday through Friday, many settings have found it essential to conduct activities during evenings or on weekends to meet client need. Students may be expected to be in their placements during such hours as a condition of placement. Students are advised, however, that most placements require practicum students to be at the site during traditional hours and no student should expect to be able to fulfill the requirements of the practicum during non-traditional hours. Students should ask about

expectations for work hours in the pre-placement interview, and expectations for evening or weekend practicum hours should be included in the Teaching-Learning Agreement.

The use of students to cover after regular working hours, over weekends, or during holiday periods in order to permit time off for regular site staff is considered an inappropriate use of students unless such coverage can be demonstrated to have educational value and can therefore be included as a part of specific objectives and learning activities in the Teaching-Learning Agreement and stated in the student's schedule on the Teaching-Learning Agreement.

Hours spent commuting to the practicum site are considered commute time and may NOT be counted toward total accumulation of practicum hours. Lunch periods may NOT be counted toward total accumulation of practicum hours unless approved by the practicum instructor. Students are not permitted to miss class for practicum activities including interviewing at practicum sites or with the Practicum Coordinator. Any absence from a regularly scheduled class should be discussed with the professor. Hours spent in class may NOT count as practicum hours.

## **SETTING UP THE PRACTICUM PLACEMENT**

Students begin to plan for practicum placement by attending an orientation at which the placement process is described in detail and questions are answered. Attendance at an orientation to the Practicum Program is required before students may apply for field instruction.

Following orientation, students complete and submit a Practicum Application. Part I and Part II may be completed in Word online on the Practicum Program webpage. These two documents must then be printed and Part II must be signed. All applications must also include a current resume and professional statement. Examples are available on the webpage. In Norman, original applications must be submitted in person or by mail to the Practicum Office. In Tulsa, students submit their application materials through D2L. **FAXED COPIES OF APPLICATION MATERIALS ARE NOT ACCEPTED.**

Part III of the application is a proposal for Employment-based Practicum Placement. It must be completed by students requesting a practicum in their current place of employment, even if their hours are unpaid, and an original signed copy must be submitted in Norman in person or by mail or in Tulsa, through D2L. **NO FAXED COPIES ARE ACCEPTED.** All Practicum Application forms are available on the webpage at [www.ou.edu/socialwork](http://www.ou.edu/socialwork). Click on Practicum and go to Student Forms.

Applications must be submitted by established deadlines. Students who do not comply with deadlines will be required to defer their practicum until a future semester. This delay will affect the date they complete their program. Incomplete applications cannot be reviewed and will be returned to the applicant for completion and submission before the deadlines. Deadlines are available on Practicum Calendars, which are posted on the website. Because many different groups of students are in practicum simultaneously, there are always multiple calendars on the website. Students are cautioned to consult the calendar applicable to them.

After submitting an application, undergraduate and foundation year students meet individually or in groups with the Practicum Coordinator or her representative to assign placement sites. Undergraduate and foundation year students then schedule interviews with their assigned practicum instructors and obtain needed approval from the site. Concentration year students have more input into their assignment and are often given at least two sites at which to interview prior to placement approval. Students must interview successfully and be accepted by a site within the time frame allotted for securing a placement or be required to postpone continuation in the program until an upcoming semester.

Because prior contact by students tends to cause confusion for practicum instructors and students alike, students should NOT make contact with possible agencies or instructors before their assignment without prior approval of the Practicum Coordinator or unless it is as a part of development of an Employment-based Practicum proposal. Students who are interested in a particular site should indicate that interest on the application.

To secure a placement, all students must submit the following forms:

- Student Placement Form
- Memorandum of Understanding-Attachment A

Both documents MUST be completed in full to secure a placement. Forms MUST be received by the deadline or the student's placement will not be secured and the student may be denied enrollment in the practicum course for the upcoming semester. Both forms are available on the website. For deadlines, see the Practicum Calendar.

### **Site-specific requirements**

Some sites, particularly medical, have additional requirements with which a student who desires a placement at that site must comply. It is the student's responsibility to find out exactly what those requirements entail and then meet them by the date Practicum begins. See the Manual appendix for a checklist of additional requirements of medical sites.

### **Malpractice Insurance**

The OUSSW requires that all students are covered by student malpractice liability insurance. Verification of coverage MUST be on file in the Practicum Office prior to beginning a placement. Most students will find it best to secure coverage through membership in NASW. See the section of this Manual entitled **PROFESSIONAL MALPRACTICE LIABILITY INSURANCE** for more information. Look on the web at [www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org) for more information on membership in NASW.

No hours will count toward the required total numbers in practicum until all required documents, including verification of malpractice liability insurance, are on file in the Practicum Office and all requirements specific to a site are met.

### **Changing Practicum Instructors or Placements**

If for any reason a student changes placements during the course of his or her practicum, a new Student Placement Form must be completed, signed, and submitted for final approval by the Practicum Coordinator. No hours may be accumulated toward practicum totals until the

placement is approved and a new Student Placement Form is on file, and only under exceptional circumstances will any of the student's hours accumulated in the first placement count toward total practicum hours for the semester.

**For further information on changing placements, see the section in this Manual on Resolution of Problems in Student Placement and Placement Reassignment.**

## **ASSIGNMENT OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS**

Students' individual interests and career goals, educational needs, previous experience, and current life situation are all considered when making practicum placement assignments. Students provide their personal information, needs, and desires through the practicum application process.

In making student assignments, the Practicum Coordinator considers the learning and personal needs and interests of the student, the learning opportunities available at practicum sites, and the experience and expectations of the Practicum Instructor. Consideration is also given to traineeships, stipends, and scholarships. Students may be placed only at sites with which the OUSSW has a formal affiliation agreement. The Practicum Coordinator makes the final determination of each student's practicum placement. By OUSSW policy, students may be placed within a 50 mile radius of their campus.

Practicum placements are dependent on the availability of sites. The OUSSW cannot guarantee placements that meet the specific interests or time constraints of individual students. Placements with weekend or evening hours are rare as most sites do not provide MSW supervision after 5 PM.

## **READINESS STANDARDS**

All students must demonstrate satisfactory classroom performance to remain in practicum and may not progress to the next practicum course without completing required coursework. Students are required to demonstrate adequacy in the spoken language of the clientele served by the site to which they are assigned.

### **Undergraduate Students**

Undergraduate field practicum coursework is open only to senior social work majors, and students make their plans for practicum during the spring semester prior to beginning their senior year. Undergraduates preparing to enroll in the practicum must have completed all social work coursework pre-requisite to the Practicum, earned a grade of at least a "C" in every required social work course, maintained a minimum of a 2.5 grade point in all required social work courses, and maintained a minimum overall GPA of 2.5. Students are responsible for providing a degree check with their Application for Field Instruction and a second degree check immediately prior to beginning the practicum. Students must demonstrate a commitment to social work ethics and personal characteristics necessary to address social issues that impact persons who are poor, disadvantaged, oppressed, or at risk.

A recommendation from the undergraduate advisor is required for each undergraduate applying for practicum. The recommendation for practicum is based on the student's attitude, maturity, professional demeanor, demonstrated judgment, interpersonal behavior, and skill. Students not recommended for practicum may appeal to the Undergraduate Committee. The Practicum Coordinator will meet with undergraduate advisers prior to making practicum assignments in order to determine recommendations for sites depending on the needs of the individual student.

Students admitted to the undergraduate program on conditional status will have their status reviewed before being recommended for enrollment in practicum. The review of status will be based on the conditions described in the student's admission letter.

### **Graduate Students**

Foundation year students must have completed or be concurrently enrolled in required foundation year courses in order to be enrolled in practicum and may not move into advanced level courses until their foundation year coursework, including the foundation year practicum, is completed. Concentration year students must have completed or be concurrently enrolled in required concentration year courses in order to be enrolled in practicum.

### **Spoken Language Requirements**

All students must demonstrate the ability to provide direct social work services to clients in the primary language used at the site to which the student is assigned. For most students, this language will be English, and both written and spoken English competency is required.

Prior to placement in a practicum site, students for whom English is not the primary language and who will be placed in a site in which English is the language used will be required to take the SPEAK test offered through the Graduate College of the University and earn a score of at least 50. The fee for testing is \$50. Students who do not earn a sufficient score will work with the Practicum Coordinator on a plan to increase spoken English skills and will be permitted to re-test at the end of the semester. Both undergraduate and graduate students will be accepted for testing on the SPEAK through the Graduate College.

### **HIPAA Training**

Students who plan a placement at a medical site are required to complete HIPAA training and provide a certificate of completion to the Practicum Office and the placement site. Training is available on line through OUHSC to students and other volunteers. Other practicum sites may also require that a student be HIPAA trained before beginning a placement, and students may do so through the OUHSC on line module. See the link on the Practicum webpage for instructions.

## **SPECIAL PRACTICUM ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Employment-based Practicum Placements (EBPP)**

Recognizing the importance of the field practicum in the educational experience of social work students, the field practicum stands as a substantial part of the curriculum and requires that students devote themselves to expanding and advancing their scope of social work practice.

Practica must offer students ample opportunities for expanding their experience in social work and for developing the competencies they require to advance in the profession.

The objective of the practicum experience is for students to obtain experience that is different from the experience they can acquire in their current jobs and/or organizational settings and different from experiences they have had in past employment and/or organizational settings.

When special circumstances exist and required policy and procedures are followed, Employment-Based Practicum Placements (EBPP) may be considered relevant options for students who can benefit from educational experiences in the place of employment as long as the employer, supervisor, and student can ensure the following (1) students are offered relevant and challenging social work educational experiences that are different and separate from their actual job responsibilities; (2) the experiences represent new learning; (3) the site offers supervision that is separate and distinct from the supervision the student receives in the actual job site; (4) students can achieve the learning aims of the practicum component of the school; and (5) the job responsibilities of students will not compromise the amount of time they invest in practica and their fulfillment of the teaching/learning agreement.

While there **is no guarantee that requests for EBPP will be approved**, when students are approved for such a practicum, the site, not the OUSSW or the Practicum Program, is responsible for the individual's compensation and benefits while a student fulfills the requirements of practicum. Prior employment or life experience may not be credited toward practicum requirements. Any deviation from standard guidelines is at the discretion of the Practicum Coordinator.

If during the course of the practicum semester it becomes apparent that an approved EBPP does not meet Practicum Program expectations or if the student does not comply with expectations of the course or placement, approval of the EBPP may be withdrawn.

## **Guidelines for an EBPP**

### **Student requirements and responsibilities**

1. Applications for EBPP will be considered when submitted from students who meet the following criteria:
  - a. MSW students in their final or concentration year of study;
  - b. Foundation year students who have completed or been exempted from the first year of part-time coursework (HBSE I, HBSE II, Diversity and Oppression, and Practice I).
2. In order to insure the investment of the employer in the student's educational experience, student applicants for an EBPP need to document at least six months employment at the practicum site. If the agency or facility has a known history or otherwise demonstrates a commitment to field education for social work students, in exceptional cases, the six month requirement may be waived.
3. The student's performance evaluations must be satisfactory and must be confirmed in writing by the student's employment supervisor. Approval of a placement for a student in a position of authority (eg's. are CEO, director, site administrator) will be granted only if the site has sufficient resources and structure to assure unbiased practicum supervision.

4. Students applying for EBPP must submit a practicum application and EBPP proposal by the established deadline or the proposal for an EBPP will be automatically denied.
5. An EBPP proposal must be submitted if the student intends to complete any portion of practicum in his or her current place of employment even if the student's practicum responsibilities will be significantly different from the work for which the student is paid.
6. The process of approval of an EBPP can take several months and students are encouraged to complete and submit applications early.
7. If a student's EBPP proposal is denied for any reason, including failure to comply with established deadlines, the student will be offered the option of delaying the Practicum until a future semester or accepting an alternative placement that is not employment-based.

### **Site requirements and responsibilities**

1. The practicum site at which a student proposes an EBPP must have an active formal affiliation agreement with the OUSSW. In cases where a student proposes a placement at a non-affiliated site, the OUSSW **may** pursue negotiation of such an agreement.
2. The site must offer diverse learning opportunities that meet the educational objectives of the student's practicum course. Practicum assignments must be **significantly and qualitatively different** from the student's current and past employment duties, represent new learning for the student, and offer the opportunity to advance the student's knowledge and practice skills. Sites may find it useful to assign a student to a different department, unit, division, or program within the site.
3. The workload of the student in practicum must be significantly less than that of regular employees of the site in order to provide time for application of classroom knowledge, further development of social work skills, and supervision and reflection.
4. The site must identify and appoint an MSW to serve as practicum instructor. This MSW must meet the criteria set by the OUSSW for all practicum instructors. The site must permit the practicum instructor to meet with the student a minimum of one hour per week for supervision throughout the practicum semester. If the site does not have an employee who qualifies or who is available to function in this role, the site may elect to use a practicum instructor from outside the site who is well-grounded in social work education. If financial compensation is necessary in order to provide such supervision, the site, not the student, is responsible for this payment.
5. The student's current employment supervisor may not serve as the student's practicum instructor or preceptor. The assigned practicum instructor or preceptor may not be assigned the role of employment supervisor during the practicum.
6. A work supervisee may not serve as the student's practicum instructor or preceptor.
7. The site must demonstrate knowledge and approval of the student's EBPP through the provision of required signatures on the student's proposal.

### **Practicum Instructor requirements and responsibilities**

1. The practicum instructor must meet the criteria set by the OUSSW for all practicum instructors.
2. The site must agree to use of the MSW identified in the role of practicum instructor.
3. The identified practicum instructor must demonstrate knowledge of and agreement to the student's EBPP through the provision of required signatures on the student's proposal.

4. The identified practicum instructor must be able to distinguish the student's job responsibilities from the student's practicum activities.
5. The identified practicum instructor must not be the person who is currently providing employment supervision for the student nor may the instructor be assigned the role of employment supervisor during the practicum.
6. The identified practicum instructor may not be the student's work supervisee.
7. The practicum instructor must agree to meet with the student a minimum of one hour per week throughout the practicum semester for a formal supervisory conference.

### **OUSSW responsibilities**

1. Practicum faculty will conduct an evaluation of the site prior to use as a practicum site for an EBPP. Emphasis will be placed on determining the designated Practicum Instructor's ability to assist with the development of a Teaching-Learning Agreement which clearly distinguishes employment tasks from educational practicum assignments.
2. Practicum faculty will monitor the placement through visits to the site and communication with student, practicum instructor, and site administration. If through the course of the practicum semester it becomes apparent that the student is not fulfilling the expectations of the approved EBPP as outlined on the approved proposal and Teaching-Learning Agreement, the placement may be terminated immediately.
3. The OUSSW has no obligation to find, pre-authorize, or assure paid placements for practicum students.

### **Procedure for student request of an EBPP**

1. Work with the practicum site to prepare the written EBPP proposal. The written proposal must outline how the site will meet the conditions of the proposed agreement, how the activities of the practicum student will meet requirements of the practicum course and differ from regular employment duties, and how the student's current job duties will be covered while the student is in the practicum. See the EBPP proposal form.
2. Complete and submit all parts of the Practicum Application including the EBPP proposal by the established deadline. All applications and proposals must be submitted before the student meets with the Practicum Coordinator for a pre-placement interview.
3. Include a copy of the student's current job description and a copy of his or her most recent performance evaluation with the EBPP proposal. If the site does not use a formal performance evaluation tool, a letter from the employment supervisor will be accepted.
4. Obtain written agreement of the student's current work supervisor, the identified practicum instructor, and the most relevant administrator, CEO, or his or her designee through signatures on the EBPP proposal. Such agreement may involve the administrator or department, unit, division, or program director. Signatures indicate that all parties have read and understand all stated requirements and activities indicated in the proposal. No application will be accepted without all required signatures.
5. Assure that the practicum instructor has been approved by the OUSSW to serve as a practicum instructor. To apply for practicum instructor status, the identified MSW must complete and submit the Practicum Instructor Questionnaire and a copy of his or her resume.

6. Assure that the site has an active formal affiliation agreement with the OUSSW. The student may make inquiry with the Practicum Office regarding site status and may assist in the process of securing such an agreement if none exists.

### **Approval process**

All EBPP proposals are reviewed by a faculty committee and all must be approved by the Practicum Coordinator. Students are notified of the status of their proposals within four weeks of the deadline for application submission.

### **Practicum Stipends**

Nearly all students can benefit from financial assistance associated with a practicum placement, and therefore financial need is only one of many factors considered when making practicum assignments. Students who have an exceptional need for financial assistance are encouraged to provide that information on their Practicum Applications.

Some practicum sites and organizations offer students either stipends or financial compensation for work as a practicum student. These placements are short-term internship positions that do not continue after the completion of the practicum. In some cases, the site provides the funding for the student placement and in others the funding comes from an outside source.

Sites and organizations that provide payment of any kind for students determine which students will be awarded the stipend, the amount of the compensation, the requirements for receipt of payment, and the payment schedule. Sites or organizations that have resources available to provide stipends for practicum placements **are required to** work with the Practicum Office to design and administer the stipend and to inform students of the application and award process.

It is important that educational considerations not be compromised whenever financial compensation becomes part of the practicum. Both students and practicum sites must cooperate to protect the educational nature of the practicum. The focus should always be on an ongoing process of increasing range and depth of practice knowledge and developing related skills. There must be time allowed to reflect upon and analyze practicum experiences, obtain systematic and regular feedback related to performance and receive structured formal weekly supervision.

### **Modified Practicum**

The practicum is an educational experience designed to unfold over an extended period of time and is so structured to protect the educational integrity of the practicum experience. A Modified Practicum is a practicum that begins before or ends after the regular practicum semester. Students must submit a Request for Modified Practicum and receive written approval in order to complete a practicum course in a modified format.

The most frequent request for practicum modification involves starting the practicum before the beginning of the practicum semester. Beginning early creates serious problems for the student. The Practicum Calendar is filled with events and due dates that correspond to the official practicum semester. A student who begins early misses information critical to beginning the

practicum experience, and the student's practicum instructor may not have the information he or she needs to begin the placement and facilitate success. Students must be aware that because of the significance of the information provided prior to the beginning of the practicum semester, some requests to modify a practicum will not be approved. In addition, some requests to extend the practicum will not be approved due to lack of available faculty support, adequate supervision, or suitable activities

Students who are approved for a Modified Practicum and do not complete the course by the end of the semester are awarded an Incomplete. Concentration year students who have a satisfactory Mid-term Evaluation are allowed to participate in graduation exercises. A final grade is awarded after the course is completed and the Final Evaluation submitted and approved. Degrees are conferred after successful completion of the practicum course.

### **Guidelines for the Modified Practicum**

1. Proposals for a Modified Practicum must include at least as many weeks as are in the official practicum semester. The fall and spring semesters are 16 weeks in length and the summer is 12. Students may not be engaged in a practicum scheduled for less than 18 hours/week.
2. Students may not be approved for a Modified Practicum unless there is a faculty member willing to extend his or her duties as a Faculty Liaison.
3. The Practicum Instructor must agree to the plan for a Modified Practicum placement.
4. No student may start early or accumulate excessive hours during any practicum week in order to end the practicum early, decrease the total number of weeks, or stockpile hours in case of a future shortage.
5. No modified practicum may continue beyond one year of the beginning of the practicum semester.

### **Procedure for student request of a Modified Practicum**

To request a Modified Practicum, students must submit a Request for a Modified Practicum by the date specified by the Practicum Office. See the webpage for the correct form.

### **Approval process**

All Modified Practicum proposals are reviewed by a faculty committee and all must be approved by the Practicum Coordinator. Students are notified of approval or denial within four weeks of submission.

### **OUT-OF-STATE AND FOREIGN FIELD PLACEMENTS**

**Due to lack of sufficient resources to assure that placements out of the state of Oklahoma can meet the expectations of the programs of the OUSSW, no out-of-state or foreign field placements will be approved for the Academic Year 2008-2009.**

## **RESOLUTION OF PROBLEMS IN STUDENT PLACEMENT AND PLACEMENT REASSIGNMENT**

Once assigned to a specific practicum site, each student is expected to complete the practicum course(s) in which he or she is enrolled at that specific site. For students in concurrent placements, this means both fall and spring semesters. Practicum placements are intended to provide students with in-depth exposure to professional social service provision. It takes considerable time in a placement to develop both an understanding of the role that the site plays in meeting the needs of the identified population and adequate skill to provide that service. All placements provide a learning experience for students even if the learning acquired is not what the student expected.

Changes in placements after the beginning of the semester are made only under unusual circumstances and only after every effort has been made to resolve problems in the placement. If a student experiences difficulties in his or her placement, he or she must follow the procedures outlined below before submitting a Request for Change in Placement.

Depending on the nature and extent of the problem, the student must first discuss concerns with the practicum instructor. Although initiating such a conversation may be difficult, it will provide the student with an exercise in self-advocacy. During this discussion, the student must state his or her concerns honestly and openly and be open to feedback from his or her practicum instructor. The student must also alert the faculty liaison to his or her concerns and the efforts made to resolve the conflict. If the student has not yet had contact with his or her faculty liaison or does not know how to contact the liaison, he or she should contact the Practicum Coordinator.

If problems are not resolved as a result of the student-initiated conference, the student or practicum instructor should contact the faculty liaison and request a visit and conference. In this conference, the student should state his or her concerns clearly and honestly, provide evidence to document these concerns, and be open to suggestions from both practicum instructor and faculty liaison. The faculty liaison may require that the practicum instructor and student develop a written contract to address the concerns. Only after a meeting with the faculty liaison may the student submit a Request for Change in Placement.

If a practicum instructor identifies difficulties with an assigned student and would like the student to be re-assigned, he or she should first request a conference with the assigned faculty liaison in order to discuss the concerns. Possible actions to support and maintain the current placement should be thoroughly discussed and considered. If the liaison finds the situation is untenable, he or she will advise the student to initiate a Request for Change of Practicum Placement.

### **Procedure for Student Request of a Change of Practicum Placement**

1. If after conferring with the faculty liaison the student believes that a change in field placement is the only suitable recourse, he or she must first complete the student portion of the Request for Change of Field Placement Form.

2. The student must then seek written comments from his or her practicum instructor. The practicum instructor reviews the form, completes the appropriate section, and returns the form to the student.
3. The student then submits the form to the faculty liaison, who reviews and completes his or her section and submits the form to the Practicum Office. Both practicum instructor and faculty liaison must review this form whether or not the request is supported by either.
4. The request is then reviewed by the Practicum Coordinator. The Practicum Coordinator will consult with the faculty liaison and may request a meeting with any of the parties involved before making a determination that a change in placement is warranted. A decision to terminate the placement will be made primarily on the following factors: 1) the nature and severity of the problem; 2) the outcome of prior efforts to address the concerns; and 3) the willingness of the practicum instructor to continue to work with the student.
5. If a decision is made to change placements, the student is responsible for developing a plan with the practicum instructor and faculty liaison for appropriate termination with clients and site. The plan should address transfer of responsibilities and clients to other service providers and completion of documentation.
6. Only after the change of placement is approved will the Practicum Coordinator work with the student on a new practicum placement.
7. If for any reason a student changes placements during the course of his or her practicum, a new Student Placement Form must be completed, signed, and submitted for final approval by the Practicum Coordinator. If the student has changed placements, no hours may be accumulated toward practicum until the placement is approved and a new Student Placement Form is on file.
8. Any new site must meet all requirements of the Practicum Program.
9. **Only under exceptional circumstances will any of the student's hours accumulated in the first placement count toward total practicum hours for the semester.**

## **IDENTIFICATION OF PRACTICUM SITES**

Students in the Practicum Program at the OUSSW are placed at community sites across the state. Students may be placed only at sites that have a formal affiliation agreement with the OUSSW. The process of affiliation with the OUSSW Practicum Program for the purpose of student field placements may begin in one of three ways: 1) agencies and sites may indicate interest by contacting the Practicum Office at the OUSSW; 2) the OUSSW may initiate interest by contacting a prospective site and exploring the site as a possible placement for social work students; and 3) a student may recommend an agency or facility as a possible placement site. In that case, the site or the OUSSW makes contact with the other party and negotiations begin.

Staff from potential practicum sites must complete a Practicum Site Information Form, which is reviewed by the Practicum Coordinator or designated member of the faculty. See the Practicum webpage for the Practicum Site Information Form. Prior to placement of students, the site must sign a formal affiliation agreement with the OUSSW and the agreement must be on file with the OUSSW.

### **Criteria considered for approval of a practicum site**

- Mission of the site and the consistency of that mission with professional social work
- Availability of qualified social work staff to serve as practicum instructors
- Physical resources to assure that the student has necessary space, materials, and support to function in a manner conducive to effective practice and optimal learning
- Programs at the site that offer exposure to a range of clientele and current intervention methods
- Commitment of the site to professional education for social work practice
- Ability of the site to offer students professional social work learning opportunities that fit with the level of students considered for placement
- Creation and maintenance of a learning environment consistent with the educational expectations of the OUSSW
- Willingness to allow the students to function as independently as skills permit and to take part in site decision-making when appropriate
- Willingness on the part of the administration to permit additional learning experiences outside the site if areas of student need are identified that cannot be met within the programs and practices of the site
- Evidence of sensitivity to issues of cultural diversity and nondiscriminatory practices in staffing and service delivery
- Accreditation by appropriate organizations

### **Procedure for designation as affiliated Practicum site**

When a potential site has been reviewed and approved, the OUSSW develops an affiliation agreement using a standard University of Oklahoma Practicum/Internship Memorandum of Understanding to designate the site as a practicum affiliate of the OUSSW. Affiliation agreements are reviewed every three years unless the site requests more frequent review. If a site requires that the OUSSW accept an agreement other than that developed at the University of Oklahoma, the site must submit the agreement to the Practicum Office for review by the OU legal division.

The OUSSW Practicum Program as part of the University of Oklahoma, subscribes to the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Titles VI and VII), Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1072, Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 402 of the Readjustments Assistance Act of 1974, and other federal laws and regulations which prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices, or procedures. This includes, but is not limited to, admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services and extends to all activities related to student practicum. In addition, by special action of the faculty of the OUSSW, discrimination against students or clients by reason of individual sexual orientation is prohibited. As extensions of the OUSSW for the purpose of educating social work students, all practicum sites must adhere to the aforementioned policies, practice, and procedures.

In addition, practicum sites are encouraged to promote opportunities for students to work with groups distinguished by age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and culture.

## **IDENTIFICATION OF PRACTICUM INSTRUCTORS AND PRECEPTORS**

### **Practicum Instructors**

The practicum instructor is the on-site social worker who has the responsibility for development, implementation, and evaluation of a student's educational experience in the practicum placement. The practicum instructor recommends a final grade for each student in placement. Practicum instructors are considered affiliated faculty of the University of Oklahoma and may make application for formal appointment through the OUSSW.

### **Required qualifications for Practicum Instructors**

- A degree in social work from an accredited program. Those providing practicum instruction in the graduate program must have an MSW. Those providing practicum instruction in the undergraduate program may have a BSW only, but an MSW is preferred
- At least two years of supervised post-BSW experience in social work practice is required for practicum instructors with a BSW only
- At least six months and preferably two years post-MSW experience in social work practice is required for those providing instruction for MSW students
- At least six months experience in current social work position

### **Preferred qualifications for Practicum Instructors**

- A license to practice social work in the State of Oklahoma
- Membership in NASW
- Evidence of continuing professional development through reading, workshops, courses, conference attendance, and participation in professional organizations
- A demonstrated interest in professional social work education and a willingness to work cooperatively with the OUSSW to accomplish educational objectives
- Demonstrated capacity for supervision or evidence of potential as an instructor
- Knowledge of the practice setting, the community within which the site functions, and the needs of the clientele served by the site
- Demonstrated knowledge of the current state of social work practice and its relation to the knowledge base of the profession
- Ability and sufficient time to carry out responsibilities of participation in the Practicum program

### **Verification of credentials**

Credentials of social workers applying for practicum instructor status are verified using the Oklahoma State Board of Licensed Social Workers data base and the OUSSW alumni data base. Those applicants who do not carry an Oklahoma social work license and did not earn a social work degree from the OUSSW may be asked to provide additional documentation in support of their candidacy.

### **Procedure for selection and appointment of Practicum Instructors**

Potential site-based practicum instructors may be recommended by the site administrator or director, other practicum instructors, practicum liaison faculty, or students who have been in

placement at that site. In addition, social workers may submit their own application for Practicum Instructor status. To apply for practicum instructor status, each prospective practicum instructor must submit a Practicum Instructor Information Form and a professional vita. See the Practicum webpage for the Practicum Instructor Information Form. All materials are submitted to the Practicum Coordinator for approval.

### **Benefits for Practicum Instructors**

Practicum Instructors who have been approved and are interested may apply for official appointment as affiliated faculty by completing and submitting a University of Oklahoma Personal Data Form. A link to this form is available on our webpage at [www.ou.edu/socialwork](http://www.ou.edu/socialwork).. Click on Practicum and the Practicum Instructors' Page.

Completed Personal Data Forms should be mailed to the OUSSW Practicum Office on the Norman campus along with a copy of the most recent resume or vita. Send all materials to Practicum Program, 1005 South Jenkins, Norman, OK, 73019. For the purposes of the OUSSW Practicum Program, only persons holding MSW's may be appointed as affiliate faculty.

All applications for affiliate faculty status are approved by the Practicum Coordinator and sent to the OU Department of Human Resources and the Office of the Provost. Once approved at that level, a letter is sent back to the OUSSW and then on to the affiliated faculty member at the address on file. Appointments as affiliated faculty expire after two years.

Although the appointments are unsalaried, OU does grant the non-monetary benefits listed below to affiliated faculty members. To access any of these benefits, affiliated faculty must have an official OU faculty ID. After receiving an official appointment letter, affiliated faculty may obtain an ID at the One Source office at the OU Memorial Union on the Norman campus or in the Human Resources Office at the Schusterman Center in Tulsa.

- Faculty borrowing privileges at the University of Oklahoma Library. Present the faculty identification card at the library in order to utilize library facilities.
- Eligibility for membership in the Faculty Club (Norman), and the Faculty House (Oklahoma City). A membership fee is required, as is the case with regular, salaried faculty.
- Eligibility for special campus events open to the faculty. Affiliated faculty have the same privileges as regular, salaried faculty for cultural, athletic or entertainment events, including faculty discounts for admission, with presentation of the faculty ID card.

Other benefits for practicum instructors include continuing education opportunities and credits through the OUSSW at no expense.

### **Preceptors**

Preceptors may be used to broaden the range of learning opportunities available to students. Preceptors may be professionally trained social workers, members of other professions, or paraprofessionals. The extent of responsibility of preceptors for the teaching and learning process is negotiated individually by the practicum instructor and approved by the faculty liaison and must be indicated on the Teaching-Learning Agreement.

Some preceptors may work with students providing the day-to-day supervision with the practicum instructor available on a consulting and supervisory basis. Other preceptors provide short term, specific learning opportunities that expand the student's experience. Preceptors participate in the overall evaluation of the student's progress consistent with the amount of responsibility they have had for the student's learning. The practicum instructor has final responsibility for the overall student evaluation and recommends the student's final grade.

Preceptors are not eligible for appointment as affiliated faculty.

## **SECTION C: ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS WITHIN THE PRACTICUM PROGRAM**

### **ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRACTICUM COORDINATORS**

**The Coordinator of Field Practicum Programs** serves as Practicum Coordinator on the Norman campus and is responsible for development, coordination, and evaluation of field education within the curriculum of the OUSSW. The Coordinator works with the Director, the Assistant Director, the Graduate and Undergraduate Coordinators, the Practicum Coordinator in Tulsa, concentration chairpersons, site administrators, on-site practicum instructors, and faculty liaisons, both regular and adjunct. The Coordinator of Field Practicum is also responsible for the programs in Norman on a daily basis.

#### **Responsibilities of Coordinator of Field Practicum Programs**

- Develop and coordinate the overall Practicum Program
- Develop and articulate the philosophy, policies, guidelines, and procedures within the Practicum Program
- Prepare and distribute documents needed for the Practicum Program, including the Practicum Manual
- Develop and maintain oversight of the Practicum website and data base
- Manage all practicum funding and budget expenditures
- Establish and monitor educational outcomes of the practicum assuring consistency with the overall objectives of the OUSSW and its components
- Prepare documents required by the Director of the OUSSW
- Provide program oversight of and consultation for the Practicum Coordinator in Tulsa
- Work to assure compliance with CSWE requirements
- Supervise Practicum Program administrative assistant

#### **Responsibilities of both Coordinator of Field Practicum Programs and Practicum Coordinator in Tulsa**

- Identification of appropriate practicum sites and development of new sites to meet the needs of students
- Selection of practicum instructors
- Assignment of students to practicum sites
- Define, develop, assign, and coordinate all faculty liaison activities
- With assistance from the Director or Assistant Director, identify the need for adjunct faculty for liaison duty, identify adjunct faculty to meet the need, and work with clerical staff to authorize adjunct faculty appointments
- Negotiate the working agreement with practicum sites and practicum instructors including the University-site affiliation agreement or Memorandum of Understanding
- Develop and implement training seminars and skill-building workshops for new and continuing practicum instructors and faculty liaisons
- Serve in the role of practicum faculty liaison on a regular basis in Tulsa and in Norman as needed

## **ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS**

The practicum experience is a learning opportunity with responsibility shared by the OUSSW, the site, and the student, but as with all coursework, the primary responsibility for satisfactory completion of the course belongs to the student. Below are listed student responsibilities fundamental to success in field placement.

### **Responsibilities of students in field practicum**

- Become familiar with Practicum policies, guidelines, and procedures outlined in the Practicum Manual
- Participate in pre-practicum planning with the Practicum Coordinator including attending planning orientation, interviewing with the Practicum Coordinator, interviewing at assigned sites, and submitting required paperwork by established deadlines. Students who do not comply with the requirements of the practicum planning process may be denied a practicum placement and required to defer continuation in the program until a future semester.
- Notify the Practicum Coordinator of any special needs, current skills, financial issues, work relationships, and practice preferences that might influence practicum planning
- Notify the practicum instructor in advance of any anticipated problems in meeting the OUSSW or site expectations regarding time or performance of required activities
- Notify the faculty liaison of any difficulties encountered which interfere with meeting the practicum expectations
- Have dependable transportation available for practicum activities, including getting to and from the placement site
- Secure student malpractice liability insurance coverage as required by the OUSSW. Additional levels of coverage may be required by the practicum site
- Comply with any additional requirements of the selected site by the deadlines established by the site
- Work with the practicum instructor to develop a challenging Teaching-Learning Agreement (TLA) that advances knowledge, practice skills, and professional autonomy
- Fulfill expectations of the OUSSW and the practicum site, including time requirements, as outlined in the TLA and the Practicum Manual
- Maintain the agreed upon practicum schedule outlined in the TLA and report any absences to the practicum instructor
- Secure personal safety through adherence to reasonable precautions; practicum site policies, procedures, guidelines, and training; and University policies
- Participate in a supervisory relationship with the practicum instructor in which self-assessment and openness to evaluation are an integral ongoing process
- Complete and submit all required paperwork to the Practicum Office by the established deadlines. Paperwork includes documents associated with setting up the placement, the TLA, weekly logs, supervisory conference forms, cumulative time sheets, Mid-term and Final Evaluations, and student evaluations of the practicum experience.
- Maintain copies of all practicum documentation and provide records as necessary to demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of work in the practicum setting

- Conduct oneself within the practicum in a professional manner that is consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics and the best interest of clients

## **ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRACTICUM LIAISON FACULTY**

**Practicum Liaison Faculty** from the OUSSW is assigned to each student in a practicum placement. Liaison faculty links the OUSSW Practicum Office and practicum sites. Liaison faculty has responsibility for maintaining a continuing relationship with the practicum setting, the practicum instructors, and students in the placement and for providing feedback to the Practicum Coordinator regarding changes, progress, and/or problems encountered in the practicum setting. Liaison faculty serve as the instructor of record for students to which they are assigned, and as the official instructor, the liaison assigns the student's grade.

Liaison faculty members maintain close contact with the student and practicum instructor in each site during the course of the semester through personal visits to the site, group meetings, and telephone and e-mail contacts. Each faculty liaison is expected to make two on-site visits during the course of the semester. Additional visits and contacts may be initiated by the practicum instructor, the site administration, or the student. In lieu of or in addition to personal visits, group sessions may be used to meet with practicum instructors and students. Students and instructors are encouraged to consult with liaisons as frequently as needed.

### **Responsibilities of the Practicum Liaison Faculty**

#### **Serve as a link between the practicum setting and the OUSSW by**

- Maintaining regular contact with students assigned and with significant personnel at the practicum site
- Communicating the goals and policies of the Practicum Program and OUSSW to the practicum instructor as well as the student
- Communicating information about classes, schedules, expectations, and related matters to practicum instructors
- Identifying training and professional development needs of the practicum instructors
- Providing regular verbal and written feedback to the Practicum Coordinator
- Providing a written evaluation of the practicum site to the Practicum Coordinator at the end of each academic year
- Acting as Instructor of Record by assigning each student's grade for the Practicum course

#### **Assist to strengthen the quality of practicum instruction by**

- Assisting with student placements
- Clarifying for practicum instructors and students expectations for different educational levels and concentrations (undergraduate, foundation year, concentration year direct practice, and concentration year administration and community practice)
- Becoming familiar with learning opportunities within and outside practicum sites
- Becoming familiar with learning patterns and needs of individual students
- Assisting with the development of the Teaching-Learning Agreement and selection of criteria for performance evaluation that are compatible with educational outcomes

- Helping the practicum instructor to evaluate each student’s progress and/or problems through regular contacts, review of written materials, tapes, videotape recordings or other appropriate media
- Helping the practicum instructor create a process whereby student deficits, difficulties, or performance concerns are addressed constructively
- Assisting in the integrative aspects of practicum experiences through conferences with practicum instructors and students
- Providing consultation to the practicum instructor for development of instructional design and skills
- Working with the practicum instructor to identify strengths and weaknesses within the practicum setting that support or limit the activities of the student and practicum instructor
- Mediating as needed between the student and the site, the student and practicum instructor, or the student and the Practicum Coordinator
- Consulting with the practicum instructor before assignment of a student’s grade

## **ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRACTICUM INSTRUCTORS AND PRECEPTORS**

**The practicum instructor** is the “on-site” person responsible for the day-to-day activities and learning of the student. The role of the practicum instructor is crucial to the success of the overall learning experience. When a practicum preceptor is assigned, he or she assists the practicum instructor with the educational plan for and evaluation of the individual student.

### **Responsibilities of the Practicum Instructor**

- Become familiar with Practicum policies, guidelines, and procedures outlined in the Practicum Manual
- Demonstrate professional conduct which supports the educational mission of the OUSSW, its Practicum Program, and the overall process of developing professionals for social work practice
- Conduct an initial interview and educational assessment of the prospective student prior to placement and explain to the student the structure, function, and requirements of the site and expectations for a student in that placement
- Provide an overall structure for the student placement by creating a well thought-out learning experience that “starts where the student is” and progresses in a logical manner in order to advance the student’s knowledge, practice skills, and professional autonomy
- Assure that employment-based practicum students are offered relevant and challenging social work educational experiences that represent new learning and are different and separate from past job responsibilities
- Plan and schedule orientation to the site and to the agency within the community setting that will fit the individual student’s needs
- Work with the student to develop an individualized, written Teaching-Learning Agreement (TLA) that reflects the planned experience. The TLA outlines specific learning activities based on outcomes identified by the OUSSW and is developed in consultation with the faculty liaison when needed.

- Provide regularly scheduled formal supervisory conferences with the student on a weekly basis
- Designate and monitor preceptors involved with the student's educational experience
- Include preceptors in educational planning and evaluation
- Meet with the faculty liaison as needed to coordinate between the OUSSW and the site and attend meetings as necessary to resolve issues that arise in the course of the practicum placement
- Notify the faculty liaison promptly in the event that problems arise in the placement including problems in student performance. Develop, in conjunction with the faculty liaison, a plan to address performance concerns that are identified.
- Complete the student evaluation forms at both the mid-term and the end of the semester and review the evaluations with the student
- Recommend a grade for the student at the completion of the semester
- Participate in appropriate training sessions, orientations, field workshops, and meetings conducted by the OUSSW

### **Role and Responsibilities of Preceptor**

- Become familiar with Practicum policies, guidelines, and procedures outlined in the Practicum Manual
- Demonstrate professional conduct which supports the educational mission of the OUSSW, its Practicum Program, and the overall process of developing professionals for social work practice
- Assist in the development of a learning experience that will advance the student's knowledge, practice skills, and professional autonomy
- Assist as needed in the development of an individualized, written Teaching-Learning Agreement (TLA) that reflects the planned experience
- Provide guidance, direction, and training for the student as assigned
- Report concerns about student performance or educational needs to Practicum Instructor promptly

## **ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRACTICUM SITES**

Students at the OUSSW benefit from the relationship of the OUSSW with well over 300 community-based agencies and facilities across Oklahoma that serve as practicum sites for field experiences. The OUSSW works with affiliated agencies and facilities to offer social work students direct learning experiences with individuals, families, groups, and communities.

### **Responsibilities of Practicum Sites**

- Engage in an official affiliation agreement with the OUSSW by providing required signatures on an affiliation agreement or Memorandum of Understanding
- Provide supervision and control of the student's activities within the site
- Designate one staff member who meets OUSSW qualifications to serve as practicum instructor and provide supervision. Designate preceptors to support as needed

- Provide the atmosphere for learning which can facilitate the achievement of educational objectives
- Provide appropriate orientation to the site and its mission and goals
- Provide each student placed at the site with policies, rules, regulations, and expectations which are pertinent to the student role
- Provide adequate work resources, including materials and space, to function effectively
- Arrange student schedules which will not conflict with those of the University and the OUSSW
- Provide adequate time for the practicum instructor to hold individual conferences with the student for at least one hour each week
- Agree to permit, upon reasonable request, the inspection of clinical and related practicum facilities by the University and those agencies charged with accreditation of the University and the OUSSW
- Consult immediately with the OUSSW if circumstances arise which require the site to ask that the student be withdrawn
- Demonstrate support for the OUSSW in fulfilling its educational mission including permitting practicum instructors to participate in appropriate training or meetings conducted by the OUSSW
- Provide for adequate safeguarding of confidential materials
- Comply with all relevant federal, state, and local laws and the OUSSW policies concerning non-discrimination

## **SECTION D: ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **PERSONAL CONDUCT AND COMPORTMENT, PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING**

Social work is a demanding profession. It involves work with people from diverse backgrounds who are experiencing a wide range of difficulties and concerns. The field practicum can present a new challenge for students and each student must have the emotional, psychological, and physical resources to provide effective assistance to clients. It is imperative that students of social work maintain a respectful and professional demeanor with clients and colleagues and take steps to prevent their personal life from interfering with their professional role.

The OUSSW adheres to standards for professional conduct from the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). Compliance with the standards of the Code requires the OUSSW to assure student competence, respect for others, and nondiscrimination. In addition, the OUSSW makes every effort to insure that the personal problems of students do not interfere with professional practice or clients' best interests. Students should have the emotional and psychological resources to render effective assistance to those in need and should strive to maintain the highest level of academic and professional performance.

When students demonstrate behavior that indicates that personal difficulties are not sufficiently resolved to allow them to work effectively with others, students may be withdrawn from enrollment in the Practicum. Consistent with the OU Student Code, a student may be withdrawn for behavior such as drug and alcohol abuse, criminal activity, or other actions demonstrating an inability to work effectively with and support others in a professional capacity. Students may be asked to submit evidence of their physical and emotional well-being from qualified professionals for reconsideration of their application, readmission, or continuation in the program.

Students who have a history of mental or physical illness or disability or personal problems that may affect their ability to complete a practicum placement should discuss these concerns with the Practicum Coordinator as a part of the practicum planning process. Once students are placed in practicum settings, concerns about physical and emotional well-being should be discussed with the faculty liaison or referred to the Practicum Office on the appropriate campus.

### **ETHICS**

Social work program applicants and students are expected to demonstrate professional behaviors that reflect a commitment to the ethics of the social work profession as outlined in the Code of Ethics of the NASW. Behavior and statements contrary to ethical standards as prescribed in the NASW Code of Ethics will be cause for denial of admission to or continuance in programs of the OUSSW. See [www.socialworker.org](http://www.socialworker.org) for a copy of the NASW Code of Ethics. Possible student violations of the NASW Code of Ethics should be reported immediately to the appropriate Practicum Office.

## **E-MAIL NOTIFICATIONS**

The University of Oklahoma has established e-mail as an acceptable means of official communication. All OU students, faculty, and staff have an assigned OU e-mail account. **All communication from the OUSSW Practicum Program will be sent to students at their OU e-mail account.** E-mail sent to this account is expected to be read in a timely fashion. Students who choose to have e-mail forwarded to another e-mail address do so at their own risk. In keeping with University policy, a student's failure to receive or read communication from the Practicum Program in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing or complying with the content of the official communication.

Students in or preparing for practicum coursework will be held responsible for checking their OU e-mail account regularly for vital information. Students are advised to use their OU e-mail accounts exclusively when sending e-mail correspondence to OU faculty. On occasion, messages sent from personal addresses are filtered out by the OU system. Students must also be aware that if they do receive an e-mail message from a faculty member at a personal non-OU e-mail address, it may be a result of the faculty member using the "reply" function or that the writer's e-mail program has remembered the student's personal address.

## **ADHERENCE TO DEADLINES**

Deadlines as stated on the Practicum Calendar are enforced. Students who do not comply with established deadlines in practicum planning may be required to defer their practicum to a future semester. Once placed in practicum, students who do not comply with established deadlines may be suspended from practicum.

## **DISMISSAL OR TERMINATION OF STUDENT FROM PRACTICUM PLACEMENT**

If, as a result of student behavior, a student is dismissed from a practicum placement, the Practicum Coordinator will investigate the reasons for the dismissal and make a recommendation for the student's continuation in the practicum course in which he or she is enrolled. Depending on the findings, the student will be permitted to continue in practicum coursework or awarded a grade of Unsatisfactory. If the student is permitted to continue in practicum coursework, he or she must complete a Request for Change in Practicum Placement form and interview at recommended sites. The student must also complete a new Student Placement Form to secure the placement. Only under exceptional circumstances will any hours accumulated in the first placement be counted toward total practicum hours.

If the student is placed in another site and fails to perform satisfactorily in that placement, the student will be awarded a grade of Unsatisfactory and dismissed from the course and from the social work program in which he or she is enrolled. Only under rare and exceptional circumstances will a student be permitted to continue in practicum coursework after two failures

in practicum placements. A student who cannot fulfill the field education requirement in social work cannot continue in the social work program.

## **ATTENDANCE**

The OUSSW expects students to be in their practicum placements on the days and at the times designated and as outlined on the student's Teaching-Learning Agreement. If students need to be absent from their sites, the policies below apply.

## **ABSENCES, ILLNESS, AND EMERGENCIES**

Students are allowed sixteen (16) hours of sick leave during the practicum semester that do not have to be made up. If a student requires more than three (3) days of sick leave, the faculty liaison must be contacted immediately. Time lost because of unanticipated personal emergencies, such as the death of a member of the family or a personal illness, must be made up. Arrangements for make-up time are made with the practicum instructor and approved by the faculty liaison. The Practicum Coordinator will be notified of the plan. Students who, due to illness or family emergencies, miss extensive amounts of practicum time may be awarded an Incomplete in the practicum course. They must then develop a plan for completion with the help and approval of their faculty liaison.

Students who will be absent due to a University holiday or break are responsible for preparing the practicum instructor and clients for these absences. Some sites may require that students be present during part or all the University recognized holidays as a condition of placement in that site. Such requirements and arrangements must be stated in the Teaching-Learning Agreement.

Undergraduate and foundation year students in Practicum observe the recognized University holiday and breaks. In most spring semesters, concentration year students in spring block field placements must work through spring break in order to accumulate the required number of hours in the field.

## **HOLIDAYS**

If a site is closed for a holiday but the University is not and it is a day that the student would normally be in placement, the student may count that time toward total practicum hours. Had the site been open, the student would have been there. Examples of such holidays are Veterans' Day and Presidents' Day.

Students are not expected to be in practicum placements on days that the University is closed. Examples of such holidays are Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, and Thanksgiving. No time may be earned for practicum on such holidays unless the student is actually at the placement on the day and fulfills responsibilities of the practicum placement.

Students who celebrate religious holidays not observed by the site may be granted leave time by the practicum instructor, but time granted for such observances may have to be made up. Plans

for such leave time must be negotiated with the practicum instructor and addressed in the Teaching-Learning Agreement.

## **OTHER ABSENCES**

### **O USSW, University, or professional organizations**

Participation in O USSW or professional governances should be discussed and addressed in the Teaching-Learning Agreement. Students who serve on O USSW or OU or professional committees with recognized stature are granted one day or eight (8) hours of excused absence during the practicum semester for such activities and may count this time toward accumulated practicum time.

### **Weather, car trouble, child care**

Absences as a result of inclement weather, car trouble, or child care must be made up. In cases of extreme weather events, the Practicum Program will follow University guidelines and procedures issued specific to the event. Students will be informed by e-mail of expectations for making up required practicum time.

### **Workshops or conferences**

Attendance at workshops and conferences is not treated automatically as an excused absence from the practicum or as a practicum activity for which practicum hours may be accumulated. The practicum instructor may decide whether the nature of the activity is sufficiently related to the student's learning objectives to warrant treating it as practicum time. The practicum instructor should use the same criteria for permitting student attendance at professional development activities as used in evaluating staff requests for such attendance. When considering a student request, practicum instructors must keep in mind that optimal learning is the primary objective of the student rather than delivery of client service.

For further information, see the Practicum webpage at [www.ou.edu/socialwork](http://www.ou.edu/socialwork). Click on Practicum and go to FAQ's.

## **MISSING CLASS FOR PRACTICUM AND COUNTING CLASS AS PRACTICUM**

Students are not permitted to miss class for practicum activities. Any absence from a regularly scheduled class should be discussed with the professor.

Students are not permitted to count classroom time for practicum UNLESS the classroom time is a regularly scheduled part of the practicum class. For example, if the practicum class in which the student is enrolled includes a mandatory practicum lab, the student may be permitted to count that time toward total practicum hours. Practicum seminars (SWK 4311, SWK 4331, SWK 5973, SWK 5983) are separate courses from practicum and time spent in those class may NOT be counted as practicum hours.

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY**

The University of Oklahoma, in compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices, or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services. In addition, the OUSSW has adopted a policy of non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

## **RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY**

Social work is a profession committed to social justice, the elimination of racism and discrimination, and an inclusive society in which racial, ethnic, social, religious, sexual orientation, and gender differences are valued and respected. In keeping with this professional commitment, the OUSSW strives to develop social work professionals who value diversity and are dedicated to social and economic justice. Practicum sites are encouraged to offer students the opportunity to practice social work skills with members of diverse population groups and to work toward competence with persons from many cultures.

## **PROFESSIONAL MALPRACTICE LIABILITY INSURANCE**

Each student placed in a practicum placement must be covered by student malpractice liability insurance and must provide proof of such insurance coverage to the Practicum Coordinator and the practicum site prior to the beginning of the practicum. **No student will be allowed to begin a practicum placement and no hours will count toward the required total number of practicum hours until proof of malpractice liability insurance is on file in the Practicum Office.**

**Students are advised that the processing of applications may take as long as six weeks and therefore must be submitted in a timely manner.**

It is the responsibility of the student to obtain and pay for malpractice liability insurance and provide proof of insurance to the Practicum Coordinator and the practicum site. **Lack of proof of insurance that completely covers the dates of practicum will delay student entry into the practicum.** If a student's insurance policy expires before the end of that student's practicum, the student will be suspended from practicum until the policy is renewed and verification of the renewal is received in the Practicum Office. Delay in entry to practicum or suspension from the practicum will likely result in delay in graduation.

The OUSSW requires that students carry a minimum of \$1,000,000/\$1,000,000 in malpractice liability insurance. Some practicum sites, especially medical settings, may require the higher limits of \$1,000,000/\$3,000,000. Students should discuss specific insurance requirements with staff at sites with which they are considering placement.

Most students will find it best to secure coverage through membership in NASW. Liability insurance at reasonable student rates is available through the Student Professional Liability

Insurance Program, designed in cooperation with the NASW Insurance Trust. Students should look on the web at [www.socialworker.org](http://www.socialworker.org) for more information. Student insurance is available from other sources as well.

Students completing an Employment-based Practicum Placement may purchase malpractice liability insurance through the Student Professional Liability Insurance Program. This insurance will cover their work in practicum because the practicum is a required component of the social work curriculum. If students completing an Employment-based Practicum are covered by their site's insurance policy and this coverage extends to practicum work, students may elect not to purchase student malpractice liability insurance. Such students must provide written verification that malpractice insurance covers all practicum activities, even those that are unpaid, to the same extent that it covers the work of the student as an employee.

**Both written verification of malpractice coverage and a statement regarding employment coverage of all practicum activities must be provided to the Practicum Coordinator prior to beginning an Employment-based Practicum placement.**

**The Attorney General of the State of Oklahoma has issued a ruling that states that insurance covering students who are employees of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services for their employment also covers their activities as students. As a result of this ruling, students who are employees of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services are not required to purchase private malpractice liability insurance or provide verification of coverage by their employer.**

## **STUDENT REMUNERATION OF PRACTICUM INSTRUCTOR**

No student will be permitted to make separate monetary payment for supervision in relation to his or her field placement. In situations where a site does not have a staff member available who qualifies as a practicum instructor, the site may, at its discretion and at its expense, contract with a qualified MSW outside the site to provide the necessary field instruction.

## **ADDITIONAL SITE REQUIREMENTS**

Students must comply with all additional requirements of a particular site in order to complete a placement at that site. These are requirements of that agency or facility, not the OUSSW. Such additional requirements may include providing immunizations records, obtaining medical tests and shots at the student's own expense, or submitting to a criminal background check, also at the student's expense. In addition, students are required to comply with all dress and appearance requirements of their assigned placement. Placement sites may have specific regulations about dress, body and facial piercings, facial hair, hair length, jewelry, and tattoos. It is the student's responsibility to learn the expectations regarding additional requirements at the pre-placement interview and to consider this information when securing a placement site. See the Manual appendix for a list of possible site-specific requirements.

## **BACKGROUND CHECKS**

A criminal record may present difficulties for students in practicum placement and in employment upon graduation. Many agencies affiliated with the OUSSW require that students submit to a criminal background check at the student's own expense, and many sites will not permit a student with any criminal background to complete a practicum placement at that site. While the OUSSW does not complete a background check on students nor review background checks that are conducted, the OUSSW does require that students report any criminal history on the Practicum Application in order to assist in making practicum assignments and that students comply with requirements for criminal background checks that are a part of placement at a particular site.

## **TRAVEL, TRANSPORTING CLIENTS, AND AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE**

Placement of students may be made within a fifty (50) mile radius of the OUSSW campus of the individual student. Students must have a dependable means of transportation and are responsible for their transportation to and from the practicum site as well as for travel connected with the placement. Proximity to home may be considered when assigning placements.

Many sites require that staff and student travel to field appointments. Some also expect students to transport clients. Student expectations for travel or transport of clients should be clarified during the pre-placement interview, as should explanations for reimbursement for travel, access to agency vehicles, and insurance coverage for students who are required to transport clients. While time spent commuting to the practicum site may NOT count as practicum time, time spent in travel while carrying out official practicum duties, such as transporting clients, travel to site visits, and travel to meetings, should be counted toward total practicum hour accumulations.

Students are not insured by the University of Oklahoma for accidents that might occur while traveling as a part of practicum responsibilities including transporting clients. The OUSSW does not require auto liability coverage for students in practicum placement, and the OUSSW accepts no liability for injury to students or their placement site clients pursuant to transporting them.

Students who are engaged in transporting clients do so at the discretion of the assigned site. The site may require the student to provide evidence of sufficient liability coverage. Expectations of the student regarding field activities and insurance coverage should be stated in the Teaching-Learning Agreement.

## **PURCHASING A PARKING PASS**

Students may be required to purchase a parking pass in order to have parking at the assigned practicum site. Students should obtain this information in the pre-placement interview. Funding is not available through the OUSSW to cover this expense.

## **STUDENT SAFETY**

It is expected that all sites where students are placed are as safe as any other social work setting. However, as with all students at the University of Oklahoma, maintaining safety and particularly the safety of students in practicum placements is a primary concern of the Practicum Program. Students are advised to ask that their practicum instructor provide written policies, guidelines, procedures and training for staff and client safety and inquire about the applicability of the policies and guidelines to student interns.

## **HOME VISITS**

If home visitation is a part of the role of social worker within the practicum agency, practicum students are permitted to make home visits unaccompanied or in the company of agency staff provided they have had complete and thorough site-appropriate training prior to making the first home visit. Students who make unaccompanied home visits must also have access to back-up coverage from staff at the practicum site. No student is permitted to make home visits unless the student has been adequately trained and fully informed of safety procedures.

## **HOTLINE COVERAGE**

If hotline coverage is a part of the role of social worker within the practicum agency, practicum students may provide such coverage only after they have completed site-appropriate training on hotline coverage and only if they agree willingly to the assignment and have access to back-up coverage from staff at the practicum site. Students in practicum placement are not expected to be a regular part of hotline duty offered by the agency at which they are placed and any time providing hotline coverage should be a very limited part of the practicum experience. No student is permitted to provide hotline coverage unless the student has been adequately trained and fully informed of safety procedures.

## **GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP AS PRACTICUM**

Appointment as a Graduate Assistant in the OUSSW may not be approved as a practicum placement. Appointment as a Graduate Assistant in a different department or program at the University of Oklahoma may be considered for a placement provided the placement can meet all requirements of the practicum.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality is a basic principle of social work intervention and all social workers are expected to maintain adequate safeguards for the private nature of the treatment relationship. Students and faculty liaisons must hold confidential all identifiable information about persons served by the agency or facility where they are placed. Social work students are expected to become familiar and comply with local, state, and federal mandates governing privacy and confidentiality as well as with policies and guidelines of their particular site. Students should also become familiar with exceptions to confidentiality, such as mandates to report, and are

expected to consult with their practicum instructor regularly on the ethical responsibility of social workers regarding standards of confidentiality.

## **REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

By law, every person in Oklahoma is required to report to the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) an incident of injury to a child where the injury appears to have been a result of physical or sexual abuse or neglect. (Reports of Child Abuse [10 O.S. Sections 7103 and 7102]) Student status does not exempt students from this law. OKDHS responds to a report by initiating an investigation or an assessment of the family in accordance with the site's priority guidelines and reports its findings on investigations to the district attorney. It is a misdemeanor to willfully fail to report.

Abuse and neglect are defined as harm or threatened harm to a child's health or safety by a person responsible for the child's health or safety and include sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. A person responsible includes parents, legal guardians, custodians, foster parents, a person 18 years of age or older with whom the child's parent cohabitates, or any other adult residing in the home of the child. Person responsible also includes a site or employee of a public or private residential home, institution or facility or day treatment program or an owner, operator or employee of a child care facility.

It is **not** the responsibility of the reporter to determine if the allegations warrant a report or if the report falls under the jurisdiction of the OKDHS.

## **RECORDS STORAGE**

Files are kept in the Practicum Office for each practicum student in order to document progress in each field placement. Files contain all relevant practicum materials and assist the faculty liaison when awarding grades. Undergraduate practicum files are stored at the OUSSW in Norman for up to 5 years after the student has completed a social work degree and may be consulted when faculty are asked for recommendations or when a student applies for further social work education. As per University regulations, graduate student files are stored for two year post receipt of an MSW.

## **STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE WITHIN THE PRACTICUM PROGRAM**

Students may have grievances directly related to the Practicum Program including the assignment of practicum placements, the award of stipends provided at some settings, experiences within the course of the practicum semester itself, or in reference to extensions or mandatory repeating of the practicum requirement.

All concerns that may be the subject of a grievance should first be discussed with the persons closest to the circumstances of the grievance. This may be the practicum instructor, site administrator, practicum faculty liaison, or practicum coordinator. The practicum coordinator on

the student's campus must be involved in any student grievance related to the practicum. If the concern cannot be resolved through an informal process, a formal grievance may be filed.

A student, practicum instructor, or an OUSSW faculty member may submit a grievance related to the Practicum Program. To do so, the aggrieved party should contact the Coordinator of Field Practicum Programs or the Director of the OUSSW and the matter will be referred to the Undergraduate or Graduate Program Committee in an effort to resolve differences. The use of the program committees does not abrogate the rights of the student or others to pursue a formal grievance through the mechanisms of the University. For further information on the grievance procedure, see the Student Code of Responsibilities and Conduct at [http://judicial.ou.edu/images/stories/student\\_codebook.pdf](http://judicial.ou.edu/images/stories/student_codebook.pdf).

Issues which deal solely with the evaluation of the student's performance in the practicum are dealt with as academic appeals and are addressed in Sections E and F of this Manual.

## **SECTION E: DESIGNING THE TEACHING-LEARNING AGREEMENT, MONITORING, EVALUATING, AND GRADING**

### **TEACHING-LEARNING AGREEMENT**

The Teaching-Learning Agreement (TLA) is the contract between student, site, and the OUSSW that outlines the individual student's educational experience for the practicum. A form for the TLA for each level of practicum is available on the Practicum webpage. The TLA is available in both WORD and PDF format. The WORD document can be easily completed and saved on the computer so that revisions are simplified. Refer to the Practicum calendar for due dates for the TLA. **Students who do not submit a TLA by the due date may have their practicum suspended. This means that no additional hours will count until the document is received.**

TLA's are completed within the first three weeks of the beginning of the semester and are reviewed and revised as needed during the semester. Students must submit revised TLA's whenever there are major revisions in the plan for the student's educational experience including change in placement site or significant changes in placement assignments. The faculty liaison must be involved in major revisions.

Students in concurrent or extended placements are expected to revise the original TLA for the second semester based on progress made and goals achieved in the first semester. These agreements do not need to be resubmitted unless they involve major revisions.

Completed TLA's must be signed by all relevant parties and submitted to the Practicum Office by the due date specified on the Practicum Calendar for the current academic year. Students who do not submit the TLA by the date specified may have their placements suspended. Students suspended from practicum will not be permitted to return to the placement site until the TLA is submitted to the Practicum Office. Practicum suspension may cause students to receive a semester grade of Unsatisfactory or Incomplete.

While the student is held responsible for submitting the TLA, the practicum instructor and centrally involved preceptors must provide significant direction in the initial completion. Consultation from seminar instructors may be essential in development of the TLA for concentration year students, and completion of the TLA may be facilitated by involvement of the practicum faculty liaison during its development. All items within the TLA must be addressed, and care must be taken to specify as accurately and completely as possible the working conditions, hours, on-call expectations, caseloads, nature of assignments, holiday schedules, sick leave policies of the site, absence policies, dress codes, and all other matters that might lead to misunderstandings during the placement experience. Criteria for determining satisfactory performance should be stated clearly. Any disputes that might occur during the semester will be reviewed initially in the context of the TLA.

Revisions of the TLA are made during the practicum placement as necessary to reflect changes in the learning plan. The student and practicum instructor must discuss all changes and revisions before such revisions are incorporated into the TLA, and the revised document must be reviewed

and signed by the faculty liaison. The student is advised to retain a copy of the revised TLA in his or her personal file and is required to send a copy of the revised and signed TLA to the Practicum Office.

## **MONITORING**

Monitoring of student progress is essential to the field experience and is the responsibility of the practicum instructor, the faculty liaison, and the student. Each is expected to assure that monitoring is an on-going process that begins the first day of the placement and continues throughout the entire field experience.

Monitoring of student progress includes regular, weekly meetings of student and practicum instructor and at least twice-a-semester meetings of student, practicum instructor, and faculty liaison. In weekly meetings, the student and practicum instructor review the TLA, discuss progress toward goals outlined on the TLA, and adjust assignments as needed. The faculty liaison visits the site at least twice each semester, meets individually with both student and practicum instructor as needed, and is available by phone and e-mail to both student and practicum instructor. The student monitors progress by appropriate use of supervision and ongoing review of the TLA.

Student performance is also monitored through the Practicum Office. Students are required to complete Weekly Logs to account for both time and activities and must complete weekly Supervisory Conference Report Forms to document the topics discussed in weekly meetings with the practicum instructor. Turning in both Weekly Logs and Supervisory Conference Report Forms is **REQUIRED** and is the equivalent of turning in assignments in a regular class. Both logs and conference forms must be authorized by the practicum instructor named on the Student Placement Form and submitted to the Practicum Office **at least every four weeks** in order to evaluate student progress. If a student does not submit weekly documentation as required, the student's practicum will be suspended until all required documentation is received and evaluated by Practicum faculty. **Practicum hours not adequately and accurately documented will not be counted.** Students are required to have copies of up-to-date Weekly Logs and Supervisory Conference Report Forms available to the faculty liaison at the time of any liaison visit.

Students are also required to complete and submit a Cumulative Practicum Time Sheet. This document must be authorized by the official practicum instructor. A copy of this document is submitted with both Mid-Term and Final Evaluations. As with all Practicum documents, forms are available on the Practicum webpage and students are advised to keep copies for their personal records.

## **EVALUATION AND GRADING**

Evaluation is critical for both learning and overall professional growth in the field of social work. Evaluation is particularly relevant during practicum as the student must be continuously refining social work skills and preparing for independent professional practice. Evaluation of the student

in practicum is subjective in nature and requires that all involved maintain open communication regarding student performance. Evaluation should be an ongoing process and not an event.

### **Mid-term Evaluation**

At mid-term and at the end of the semester, the practicum instructor conducts a formal evaluation of the student. The formal, written Mid-Term Evaluation plays a significant role in monitoring student progress by facilitating communication and providing the practicum instructor and student with the opportunity to discuss any problems, concerns, or lack of expected progress. As a result, a change of course or a plan for remedial intervention can be initiated. **Any deficiency that represents a serious problem must be stated on the written mid-term evaluation and the faculty liaison notified.**

The written Mid-Term Evaluation must be completed by the practicum instructor and reviewed and signed by the student. It is submitted to the Practicum Office by the date specified in the Practicum Calendar and reviewed by the faculty liaison. If deficiencies are noted on the Mid-Term Evaluation, the faculty liaison will meet with the practicum instructor and the student.

A form for the Mid-Term Evaluation for each level of practicum is available on the practicum webpage. Refer to the Practicum calendar for due dates for Mid-Term Evaluations. **Students who do not submit their mid-term evaluation by the due date may have their practicum suspended. This means that no additional hours will count until the document is received.**

### **Final Evaluation**

At the end of the practicum semester, each student must submit a Final Evaluation to the Practicum Office. The Final Evaluation provides the practicum instructor and student the opportunity to discuss the student's progress and achievements as well as recommendations for future practicum placements and plans for a career in social work. A form for the Final Evaluation for each level of practicum is available on the practicum webpage. Students are also required to submit any remaining weekly logs and supervisory conference forms at the end of the semester. If required forms are missing, the student will not be awarded a Satisfactory grade. Refer to the Practicum Calendar for the due date for the Final Evaluation and final practicum materials.

The Practicum Program recommends that prior to the final supervisory conference, the student and practicum instructor each complete separate copies of the Final Evaluation form and that the two evaluations serve as a basis for discussion during the last supervisory conference of the semester. The practicum instructor is responsible for completing the final written document, determining the final rating for each item on the evaluation form, and recommending the final grade for the student. The student, however, is responsible for submission of the original Final Evaluation to the Practicum Office. The faculty liaison reviews the Final Evaluation and awards the final grade. Practicum grades assigned are either "S" for Satisfactory or "U" for Unsatisfactory. Under some circumstances, an Incomplete may be awarded.

If there is a disagreement between student and practicum instructor on the Final Evaluation, the faculty liaison must be consulted. If there is serious disagreement between the practicum

instructor and faculty liaison on a final grade for the student, the Practicum Coordinator completes a comprehensive review of the situation and awards the grade.

Student signature on either Mid-Term or Final Evaluation does not imply student agreement, and signature by the student does not compromise the right to appeal the evaluation. Space is provided for student comments on each evaluation. Student appeals of an academic evaluation in the practicum are the same as for any classroom course.

### **Letter from Practicum Instructor**

The final letter from the Practicum Instructor is no longer required. However, a student may appreciate a letter of reference, and practicum instructors are encouraged to provide such a letter directly to the student. If the practicum instructor has additional information or concerns about the student and wishes to share this with the OUSSW, comments may be sent in letter form to the Practicum Coordinator.

### **Unsatisfactory Student Performance and Extended Practicum Time**

If a student's performance is unsatisfactory, the student must be notified well in advance of the Final Evaluation so that measures can be taken to address deficiencies prior to the end of the semester. The faculty liaison assists the practicum instructor in identifying areas of concern and in developing a written remedial plan. The Practicum Coordinator must be informed throughout the process and a copy of the remedial plan must be provided to the Practicum Office for the student's Practicum file.

If the student has failed to demonstrate satisfactory performance at the end of the normal practicum period, the practicum instructor may recommend a grade of "U" (Unsatisfactory), which is a failing grade. All recommendations for unsatisfactory grades will require review with student, practicum instructor, faculty liaison, and Practicum Coordinator. A student who receives an unsatisfactory grade in practicum may repeat the course only with the approval of both Undergraduate or Graduate and Field Education committees.

If there is reason to believe that performance may improve with additional exposure, the practicum may be extended by agreement of the student, practicum instructor, faculty liaison, and Practicum Coordinator. Such an agreement will include a modified TLA, which presents a strategy for remediation of the student's deficiencies, and the student will be awarded a grade of Incomplete. In no case will an extension due to poor student performance exceed one semester.

If a student is awarded a grade of Incomplete due to lack of submission of paperwork by the established deadline, the student will be notified in writing of the terms of the Incomplete and the deadline for make-up of the Incomplete. If the student fails to submit required documentation by the deadline specified in the written notification, the Incomplete will be changed to a grade of Unsatisfactory.

### **Academic Evaluation and Appeals**

Practicum grades assigned are either "S" for Satisfactory or "U" for Unsatisfactory or "I" for Incomplete. Grades are assigned by the practicum faculty liaison upon recommendation by the

practicum instructor. In the event that the faculty liaison and practicum instructor cannot agree upon a grade, the grade will be assigned by the Practicum Coordinator.

Appeals, as used in this section, refer to requests for reconsideration of an academic evaluation. The student is required to sign both Mid-Term and Final Evaluations to indicate student review. Signature does not imply agreement and does not compromise the right to appeal the evaluation. Space is provided for student comments on each evaluation. Student appeals of an academic evaluation in the practicum are the same as for any classroom course. The appeal procedure is detailed below.

### **Academic Appeals Procedure**

According to the University's Scholastic Regulations and Standards, the responsibility for academic evaluation rests with the faculty. However, students do have protection against prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation. If a student believes he or she is being wrongfully or unfairly evaluated by an instructor and the matter cannot be resolved in conference with the instructor or the department chairperson or director, an appeal may be made to the appeals board of the college offering the course. If the differences cannot be resolved informally, the student may contact the appropriate college board. For further information on academic appeals, see the student code at <http://www.ou.edu/studentcode/OUStudentCode.pdf>.

### **EVALUATION OF THE PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE**

In order to evaluate student practicum experiences, completion of the Student Evaluation of the Practicum Experience is required of all students in practicum coursework. Individual grades will not be awarded until the student has submitted this evaluation. The Student Evaluation of the Practicum Experience is not read or reviewed until after the student's grade has been recorded, and although anonymity cannot be assured to students in completion of the evaluation, confidentiality can be and will be maintained.

See the Student Forms page at [www.ou.edu/socialwork](http://www.ou.edu/socialwork) for forms. The completed form must be submitted directly to the Practicum Office on the student's campus.

Students are also encouraged but not required to complete an evaluation of their faculty liaison. Forms for Evaluation of the Faculty Liaison are also available on the Student Forms page of the webpage.