Practicum Guidelines
HE 685
Higher Education Program
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Introduction

The practicum (HE 685) is an essential part of the Higher Education degree program. It is a supervised on-the-job experience in an approved college or university setting or public agency involved with higher education. This document assists the student and the supervisors in managing the practicum by describing practicum requirements, procedures for applying for practicum placement, policies, roles and responsibilities of those involved, and the practicum seminar component and by providing forms and materials. It also ensures that the University supervisor, the student and the on-site supervisor are aware of both legal and academic aspects of a practicum.

The Higher Education Administration or Student Affairs practicum is designed to meet the most current Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education criteria for Master’s programs in Student Affairs. A practicum takes place in an approved educational setting under the supervision of the practicum coordinator and a qualified site supervisor. The practicum site supervisor must be a qualified practitioner in student affairs administration or higher education. The practicum experience should draw on current research, practice, policy and ethical guidelines for the profession to enhance student learning. This training provides students with the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge and develop an understanding of the relationship between theory and practice. Practicum also introduces the student to the work environment and current issues; provide an opportunity to develop professional and personal competencies important to the identity of a higher education/student affairs professional; and helps clarify professional employment and educational goals.

If you need further information than is presented here, please contact:

Practicum Coordinator:

Lori Cohen Scher, Ph.D., Director of Academics
Work Phone: 703-993-4495
HEP Office: 703-993-2310
Email: lcohen@gmu.edu
Practicum Requirements

Prerequisites:

- Prior to a practicum, the student must have earned a minimum of 9 credits of Higher Education courses.

*These courses must be completed with a grade “B” or higher.* In order to begin the practicum, you must be student in good standing.

Practicum Proposal:

All decisions pertaining to the planning and conducting of a practicum experience must be completed in consultation with a site supervisor, the Higher Education practicum coordinator, and the student’s advisor. The following are guidelines as you consider your practicum proposal:

- Develop a resume to share with potential practicum site supervisors.
- Identify a potential practicum site and site supervisor.
- With the site supervisor’s assistance, complete the *Request for Approval of Practicum* form. This proposal will lay out the agreement between the student and the supervisor, defining the learning outcomes and expectations, proposed site work schedule, schedule for supervision, training requirements, and how the student will be evaluated.
- Schedule an appointment to meet with the Higher Education practicum coordinator to discuss proposed practicum.
- Submit resume and *Request for Approval of Practicum* form to Higher Education Practicum coordinator by one of the following deadlines:
  - Summer: March 1
  - Fall: July 1
  - Spring: November 1
- Upon approval from Practicum Coordinator, register for the Higher Education Practicum, HE 685.

Identifying a Practicum Site:

- A student must satisfy the practicum requirement by completing a minimum of 150 hours of field experience at one site.

- Students are responsible for finding their own practicum placement sites. The Higher Education practicum coordinator maintains a list of college/university departments or offices that have expressed interest in practicum students from George Mason University. Practicum sites must have a qualified professional on-site supervisor and must offer a supervised experience that meets the program criteria and the student’s personal and professional goals. Criteria for approved sites are listed below. Upon
obtaining a tentative commitment from the site supervisor, the student completes and submits a Higher Education Practicum Application to the practicum coordinator. *Final approval of a practicum site is made by the Higher Education Practicum Coordinator.*

**Possible practicum sites:**

academic advising, learning services, financial aid, career services, assessment, diversity programs and services, international programs and services, orientation, admissions, disability services, residential life, student athlete advising, student activities, student unions, dean of students, women’s center, student leadership, student involvement, service learning, student services/university life administration, wellness, violence, alcohol education, and education association headquarters

**Criteria for Approved Sites:**
- The site demonstrates a commitment to training and a clearly articulated philosophy of training which includes ideas about how to introduce “novice” practitioners to a new knowledge and skill areas, how to assess students’ progress, and how to address possible training problems.
- The site has a position description for the field experience that includes the types of services, activities, and projects and the nature of the clients with which the student will be involved. The agency must assure that students will have breadth as well as depth of experience in higher education administration or student affairs.
- The site and those designated as supervisors are in compliance with professional ethics standards and practice guidelines published by the Council for the Advancement of Standards and by the association representing their particular profession. A set of those professional standards must be provided to and reviewed with the student.

**Criteria for Approved Supervisors:**
- The site supervisor must have an earned master’s degree in higher education or a related field.
- The supervisor provides a minimum of at least one hour of on-site individual supervision per week.
- Supervisor has to have been at site for at least one year
- Supervisor may not directly supervise practicum student at place of employment

**Restrictions on Sites and Practicum:**
- Students may not train in settings in which they are employed. If the student is employed by a large agency or organization, the practicum may be completed in that agency. The student must provide the practicum coordinator with an organization chart illustrating the reporting structure.
- Students may receive compensation for their practicum activities.
**Student Evaluations:**
Students will be evaluated by their supervisors two times during the course of their practicum. The evaluations are returned to the practicum coordinator by the supervisor after the student and supervisor have had an opportunity to review the form together. The student must sign the evaluation form; the signature is an indication that the student has reviewed and received the evaluation. Mid-way through the practicum, the student and site supervisor will meet with the practicum coordinator.

**Site Evaluations:**
Students will have the opportunity to provide feedback on their practicum site.

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**Roles and Responsibilities in the Practicum**

**Students**
1. Complete and submit by deadlines all practicum forms and materials.
2. Adhere to principles and practices for professional, legal and ethical conduct. Consult the *CAS Standards* as well as current practice guidelines for the profession with which the site is affiliated.
3. Develop respectful working relationships with staff and clients.
4. Report to work on time and maintain the agreed upon work schedule. Clear vacation or other leave times with the supervisor in advance and with sufficient notice. Contact the supervisor as soon as possible when an unexpected absence or delay in arrival occurs. Discuss expectations surrounding work during academic breaks.
5. Maintain a log of your work hours. Complete the requisite number of hours during the agreed upon time period. Have your site supervisor sign this log.
6. Actively solicit feedback from the supervisor and/or others involved with your training and learning experience. Engage in self-reflection of performance and learning experiences.
7. Maintain weekly journal entries.
8. Prepare a final portfolio, including the following components:
   - Weekly journal entries that document learning experiences and projects, as well as reflections and goals for problem situations
   - Materials developed as part of the internship experience
   - Additional evidence of meeting learning objectives
   - 3-4 page paper reflecting on how this experiential learning opportunity has helped develop awareness of issues in higher education (references to higher education coursework are expected)
   - Written mentor evaluation (rubric developed with practicum coordinator)
9. Immediately inform supervisor and/or practicum coordinator of any difficulties encountered.
10. Make effective use of supervision by preparing for supervision sessions, bringing relevant materials to sessions, formulating questions. Be responsive to direction, guidance, and constructive feedback from the supervisor and integrate the guidance and feedback into work at the site.