



MSW Practica: Frequently Asked Questions **Office of Field Education (OFE)**

What is a field instructor?

A field instructor is a professional who must have:

- A MSW to supervise foundation-level students
- A related master's degree or Ph.D. to supervise concentration-level students
- At least two years of post-graduate experience and demonstrated expertise in the field
- A minimum of one-year employment at the practicum organization
- Support and approval from organization to serve as a field instructor
- Attended the collaborative training (For local field instructors)
 - Completed session #1 and #2, before supervising practicum students
 - Completed remaining sessions, 3 – 6, within two years

What are the responsibilities of the field instructor?

- Define the role and scope of the student in practicum
- Orient student to the staff, clients, culture, policies, and procedures of the organization
- Supervise a maximum of three students per semester
 - An exception to this policy may be made for professionals whose primary job is to supervise practicum students or volunteers
- Assist the student in completion of the Educational Learning Agreement (ELA)
- Complete the field instructor section of the ELA
- Provide a minimum of one hour per week, face to face, individual supervision
- Participate in a site visit to discuss the student(s) progress
- Commit to graduate-level field education by:
 - Being attentive to individual student needs
 - Supporting and mentoring students' professional development
 - Sharing professional expertise and providing ongoing feedback
- Provide student with adequate work space i.e., access to office equipment, computer, telephone, etc.
- Review student's self-evaluation and complete a final evaluation
- Contact the OFE
 - should any problems/concerns arise
 - if there is any change in contact information for the field instructor or organization
 - excessive unexcused absences of the student or field instructor

What are the benefits of being a field instructor?

Brown School field instructors are provided the following benefits:

- Continuing Education Units (CEUs)
 - Three CEUs are granted each academic year to active field instructors
- Continuing Education and Professional Development Events (at a reduced cost)
 - Access to the Professional Development Series
- Opportunity to audit Brown School courses
 - Requires permission from course instructors
- Libraries
 - Access to the Brown School Social Work Library and Olin Library
 - Access to online Evidence- Based Practice (EBP) Resource Area

How do I attract students to my agency?

- Students follow a process of self- or- guided selection
- Agencies develop flyers and brochures for posting and advertisement
- Practicum Agency Fair is held annually (September)
- Agency on-campus visits are available every semester

When are students eligible to do their practicum?

- Following the Brown School's academic sequencing, most students begin foundation practicum in the second semester of their first year
- Students entering the MSW program with advanced standing can begin their concentration level practicum their first semester of enrollment
- Students with advanced standing interested in going out-of-state or abroad are eligible in their second semester of enrollment

How long does it take for students to complete practicum?

- Practicum hours are scheduled based on a student's educational plan and the organization's need
 - Schedules are negotiated between the student and the field instructor
- Practicum can be completed on a part-time or full-time basis adding up to no more than 40 hours per week

What is the Educational Learning Agreement (ELA)?

- The ELA serves as the learning agreement and guide to frame the students' progress towards gaining competency in the field experience
- In consultation with the field instructor, students are required to complete the (ELA) specific to their practicum level and concentration
- Each practice behavior listed in the ELA must be addressed during the course of the practicum experience

What is a task supervisor?

- An organizational task supervisor is often a staff member who assumes specific responsibilities for students' practicum learning as delegated and monitored by the field instructor
- A task supervisor does not replace the field instructor nor can the task supervisor substitute for the field instructor weekly supervision obligation
- The task supervisor is not expected or required to meet Brown School's criteria for field instructor responsibilities, but should be informed of practicum requirements and procedures

What are the responsibilities of students in the field?

Responsibilities of students in practicum are as follows:

- Adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics
- Demonstrate professional compliance with organizational policies and procedures, including adherence to the organization's dress code
- Attend and actively participate in weekly supervisory sessions, including preparing an agenda for supervision, if requested
- Keep a timesheet of completed practicum hours
- Fulfill all the learning obligations and expectations outlined in ELA, including demonstrating all competencies and practice behaviors
- Communicate with the field instructor regarding learning needs and interests, conflicts regarding field instruction, and challenges to develop as a professional social work practitioner
- Participate in the site visit
- Consult with the organization about safety and liability
- Contact the OFE if problems and/or concerns arise
- Submit the following required documents to the OFE in order to receive a practicum grade:
 - Student Self-Evaluation of Competencies and Performance
 - Student Assessment of Practicum Experience
 - Practicum Timesheet

How many hours of fieldwork do students need to complete?

- 360 practicum hours for Foundation level students
- 600 practicum hours for Concentration level students
- Lunch hours and travel time to and from the practicum setting are not counted as time worked
- Students cannot exceed a 40-hour practicum work week
- Elective practicum hours can be earned upon completion of all foundation and concentration practicum hours

Can students complete practicum at their place of employment?

- The OFE does not recommend that students complete practicum at their place of employment
- For more information contact the Office of Field Education

Additional resources:

- Brown School External Website: <http://brownschool.wustl.edu/Pages/Home.aspx>
- St. Louis Social Work Field Education Collaborative: <http://www.fieldedu.com/>