

Practicum Student Handbook

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-WHITEWATER

**University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
School Psychology Program**

Training Objectives

The Practicum in School Psychology (PSYCH 793) is a local school district placement with an accompanying two and one-half hour seminar and on-campus supervision. This practicum occurs only following the attainment of the master's degree and the recommendation of the Coordinator, in consultation with the School Psychology Committee of the general psychology faculty.

The Practicum in School Psychology (PSYCH 793) is a minimum 600-hour, two semester, supervised field experience in the public schools. This Practicum is a logical extension of the Program Objectives and the supporting course work. Those Objectives, as also articulated in the School Psychology Graduate Student Handbook, are:

1. To train individuals who intend to be practicing school psychologists and who will promote school psychology as a profession in the highest representative fashion;
2. To teach the basic skills and content areas of psychology and education in order to meet the requirements of School Psychology as defined by the National Association of School Psychologists, the American Psychological Association, and the Wisconsin State Department of Public Instruction Certification for Provisional and (Full) School Psychologists;
3. To teach students to have respect for the scientific rigor and principles that are the hallmark of the field of psychology at large and the integration of science and professional practice;
4. To train students skilled in non-biased assessment of school-aged children and youth and to see that assessment as integrated with well-researched, measurable treatment procedures;
5. To train students to become competent in serving as consultants to teachers, parents, and other personnel in their work setting and prepared to carry out programs of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention;
6. To train students to become professionals who will act as child advocates and facilitate the optimal best interest of the child in the environments of school, home and community;
7. To train students to become professional school psychologists who are sensitive to and accepting of human diversity and who are academically prepared for the challenges presented in a pluralistic society;
8. To train students to become professionals who will not only be effective consumers of others' research, but as a function of their practice, be able to conduct applied research to benefit the children and families whom they serve;
9. To provide students with exposure to and understanding of the ethics and values of the school psychology profession;
10. To promote in students a need and respect for continuing professional development and to address those needs through advanced continuing professional development.

In addition to the above Program Objectives, the Practicum has more specified additional Objectives:

1. Provide students with supervised training opportunities that reflect a logical extension of their university course work in the areas of assessment, direct intervention, consultation, prevention, and professional school psychology within the context of a close, mentor relationship with field and university supervisors;
2. Provide students with an immersion into the organization and structural components of public school functioning including administrative and faculty organization, pupil service design, and associated legal and legislative issues;
3. Provide students with an understanding of and experience with the assessment and intervention process associated with IDEA and Wis. PI-11, including problem-solving consultation, case management assessment, IEP Team decision-making, parent and teacher feedback, and educational plan development;
4. Provide experience for students with a wide diversity of pupil needs and characteristics, including those children with low-incidence handicapping conditions as well as those pupils and families of diverse, cultural backgrounds.

Supervisory Responsibilities

Students should remember at all times that they are still learning the skills and behaviors necessary to function at a later date as a school psychologist. While they are expected to make judgments appropriate to their education and maturity, practicum students are not expected to be a “beginning school psychologist.” Students should take on only those responsibilities for which they feel prepared and request on-task supervision and/or guidance for all others. This is the obligation of the student. Practicum students should expect a level of anxiety and discomfort, but should always request supervision if the student believes that his or her preparedness is not equal to the task or in some way may not serve the child at the best level.

If the student believes that he or she is receiving inadequate supervision, speak up! We want students to have the best practicum possible. Remember, practicum students have an internship year upcoming that is also a learning experience: students should not feel the need to over-reach this year.

Practicum students have **field supervisors** and a **university supervisor**. The field supervisor is the licensed school psychologist who is directly responsible for the day-to-day activities in the district or agency. That individual is the first resource for any concerns related to the practicum at his or her site. In collaborative consultation with the university supervisor and the student, the practicum is planned at the beginning of the year. Every effort will be made to follow the plan as designed. The university supervisor has the responsibility to assist in every way possible through the practicum seminar and regular individual or small group supervisory meetings.

Planning and Evaluation

Students work particularly close with both supervisors during the Practicum in School Psychology (PSYCH 793). Field supervisors model procedures and monitor student training experiences. University faculty make visits to school sites for observation and consultation. The Practicum Planning Form is completed jointly by the student and both field and university supervisors to insure a broadly-based experience. Students are guided by the Practicum Training Protocol. Students maintain Practicum Activity Logs, which are monitored by the university supervisors on a weekly basis. Structured evaluations using the Practicum Evaluation Forms are conducted twice—during the Practicum I semester and at the conclusion of the Practicum II semester. Students are also observed on-site by university supervisors and are evaluated with regard to their seminar participation. While the Practicum Evaluation Form is a critical and essential advisory evaluation instrument, the final assignment of grades rests with the university supervisor.

Practicum Seminar

The Practicum in School Psychology (PSYCH 793) is supported by a regular two and one-half hour seminar for all practicum students which meets at the university (Milwaukee Public Schools students also participate in an additional seminar in Milwaukee). This seminar is designed to address specific needs of the students. In the first semester, essential foundational skills, such as report writing, special education procedures and program criteria, and school organization are discussed. The second semester is dedicated to a particular curricular specialty area.

Additional Issues for Student Information

Preparation

Students are responsible for the material presented in the course work which they have taken thus far. For example, the field supervisor and the university supervisor expect a practically flawless administration of those psychometric instruments covered in the training to date. There is no excuse for shortcomings in test administration, save poor preparation on the part of the student. This is not to say that many children will not challenge the student's administrative skill through their behavior; rather, it is to emphasize the need to be ready.

Calendar Schedule

Students are on the official calendar of the practicum school district. This means that students begin and end the practicum with the district. This also means that winter and spring breaks are those of the school district, not the university. If the district schedules a non-pupil attendance day – e.g., parent teacher conference, teacher inservice – during a regularly scheduled practicum day, students are obligated to either participate in the scheduled activity, in an alternative activity on site, or make up the day. Snow days are freebies. (There has to be some compensation for living here.) Inform the field supervisor regarding plans to attend professional conferences. Students are required by law to document *at a minimum* 600 hours of practicum over the school year.

Ethical Behavior

Professional and academic behavior is guided by NASP's Principles for Professional Ethics, relevant sections of the UW-W School Psychology Handbook, and UWS Chapter 14. Students are further guided by the counsel and recommendations of supervisors. Bring all concerns to the immediate attention of supervisors as they become known and/or before engaging in the activity in question.

District Policies

The practicum student is a guest in the district or agency in which he or she is placed. Students should respect that status by adhering, without waiver, to the policies and practices of that district and bring concerns or questions to supervisory attention as they may arise. This is particularly true for parking, sign-in/out policies, computer and phone use. Ask your supervisor for a copy of the staff handbook, if available.

Schedules

Students should keep a tight schedule. This means they should be on time, **not** "just a few minutes late." Students should call in when delays are unavoidable, or first thing when it is clear that they will miss the day altogether due to personal/family illness. Medical and dental appointments happen; it is the obligation of the student to work out personal outside appointments with the field supervisor ahead of time.

Dress

Practicum students should dress professionally. This means no jeans, collarless t-shirts, sweatshirts, athletic shoes, shorts, or other clothing better suited for athletic or social activities. Ties are generally expected for men. When in doubt, students should overdress with conservative taste. This is particularly true for IEP meetings or other occasions when parents are expected. Look like the professional you want to be.

Titles

Pupils in the schools should refer to practicum students as Mr. or Ms./Miss/Mrs. unless your field supervisor specifically requests otherwise.

Relationships with Pupils

Practicum students are expected to maintain strictly professional relationships with both the children they serve, as well as all other children in the school district. Providing children with gifts, money, automobile rides, or other special favors should be strictly avoided unless approval is obtained from the field supervisor, and this would only be in unusual circumstances. Even the appearance, let alone the reality, of inappropriate romantic or sexual behavior with pupils should be avoided under all circumstances. Avoid hugging, tickling, or otherwise physically touching all pupils beyond a simple handshake or handhold to escort young children. Do not place children in your lap. If a distressed child cannot be consoled verbally, escort them to a supportive service professional or other available staff member. Leave the office door partially open when you are alone with a pupil about whose

behavior or intentions you may be unsure. Never be hesitant to ask another adult to sit in with you. Report any concerns in this area to either supervisor immediately.

Relationships with Supervisors

Practicum students are expected to maintain strictly professional relationships with their supervisors, and the same holds for supervisors with their students. It is a violation of the NASP Principles for Professional Ethics for supervisors to engage in sexual relationships with supervisees. Enjoy one another's company, share lunch or an after work beverage, but always keep it professional. Relationships with non-supervisory staff members are at your own risk.

Reports

Students should submit reports in a timely fashion, remembering that re-writes are all a part of the experience. Supervisors should be asked when he or she wants the first draft, and students should have it to them **no later** than that date.

Unstructured Time

Practicum students are expected to take advantage of time at the practicum site. This means that they are always seeking out new learning experiences. Extended periods or frequent incidences of waiting about aimlessly for a supervisor to tell a student what to do will reflect unfavorably. Observing classes, writing reports, obtaining background records or class schedules are all examples of activities that can be done in the absence of direct supervision. Students should be "proactive" and plan ahead for this eventuality.

Time Outside of Normal School Day

Practicum students who desire to participate in school-related activities that occur outside of the regular attendance hours (e.g., FAST Program, evening parent conferences) should inform the university supervisor ahead of time. Some such activities will need to be done over and above normal practicum time.

Documentation of Hours

Practicum students are expected to fully, faithfully, and accurately document their practicum activity time in the Practicum Activity Log. "Practicum activity" means that time when the student is in the district actively pursuing supervised experience related to the objectives of the Program and/or the Practicum. It may also mean:

1. Approved attendance at a regional, state, or national school psychology conference, or approved continuing education workshop, for those hours that the student would otherwise be at the district. In other words, if Thursday is your regularly scheduled practicum site day, and you attend the WSPA conference on Thursday, you may count Thursday only as a full practicum day. If it is not your regular attendance day, it may not be counted.
2. On site report writing time **not to exceed two hours in a practicum week;**
3. Travel time between practicum sites in a single day;
4. A one-half hour lunch.

The following may **not** be reported as practicum time:

1. Report writing or test scoring at home or at the university;
2. Travel time to the practicum site from home or from the site to home or the university;
3. On-site time related to other course work or personal business unless specifically approved;
4. The Practicum Seminar.

Confusion as to this policy should be brought to the attention of the university supervisor. A student who knowingly misrepresents practicum hours will be subject to disciplinary procedures as determined by the School Psychology Committee.

Practicum Training Protocol

Students are provided with a training document, the Practicum Training Protocol that serves as a baseline guide. Successful completion of the Practicum in School Psychology is directly linked to this protocol. Students are expected to follow it exactly as it is written. Any variation must be approved by the appropriate university supervisor ahead of time.

Documentation of Training Competencies

Students are expected to monitor the expected competencies as written in the appropriate sections of the UW-Whitewater School Psychology Program “Continuum of Competencies” located in the UW-W School Psychology Handbook. Practicum field supervisors understand the need to expose students to these training opportunities, but ultimate responsibility rests with the student through careful attention to ensure that they are met. Students should consult with field and university supervisors if they have concerns in this regard. Practicum-specific competencies are contained in this document for student reference.

All students in the UW-Whitewater Practicum are responsible for the information contained in this publication. Students should consult their university supervisor with any questions at the soonest possible time.