

Practicum Guidebook

Prepared for

Psychology Majors at Misericordia University

By

The Psychology Department

(revised February 2014)

## Practicum Guidebook

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Almost all students who earn their degree in psychology do Practicum – PSY 475 as one of their graduation requirements. The purpose of this guidebook is to make this process run smoother. This document should make it easier to see what practicum is and how to navigate completing it. Paying close attention to what is in this document is in your interest as students from other colleges and programs will be vying for the same spots you are going after. By being better informed and prepared you stand a good chance of getting the practicum site you will find most advantageous to you.

### **Part 1: Fundamental Issues**

#### *-What is practicum?*

Practicum is an opportunity for students to learn from direct experience about a profession that they have interest in possibly pursuing, and an opportunity to learn from other people's experience about other potential professions.

#### *-Who is eligible?*

Psychology majors in their junior year should apply for practicum for the fall semester of their senior year when you meet for advising in the spring semester. If you plan to take practicum in the spring semester of your senior year, you should apply by advising week of the fall semester of your senior year.

#### *-How do I enroll?*

You would register for PSY 475 and complete the Goals & Objectives form and Learning Contract (see Appendix E & F). Those documents need to be turned in to Dr. Nordstrom before starting at your site. .

#### *-How is it set up?*

You meet with your on-site supervisor to determine what type of work they do there and what you could learn from doing your practicum at that location. In addition, your campus practicum supervisor will notify you as to when the seminars associated with your practicum will start. This seminar meets bi-weekly.

#### *-Where do I find a practicum site?*

You can do your practicum at any location where the work is somehow related to psychology, and there is someone in the organization who is willing and eligible to supervise you. You set up your practicum site at the community setting of your choice. You can ask your practicum supervisor for resources to help you such as the blue pages in the Yellow Pages, HelpLine guidebook or the handbook of previous sites used by former practicum students.

*-When does it take place?*

The practicum is a 100 hour experience in a career associated setting. You should attempt to complete your hours well before the semester is over as having to work hours at your site during “crunch time” can be difficult at best. Practicum involve keeping a journal of your activities, attending bi-weekly practicum team meetings, presenting two research articles over the course of the semester in your practicum meetings, and writing a final paper.

*-What do I say when I call to set up my practicum site?*

Explain that you are a Psychology major at Misericordia University and you need to work 100 hours for an unpaid practicum course (you can also use the words “internship” or “fieldwork placement”) for a semester. Emphasize that your work is part of a larger course so you will need to have on-site supervision with a supervisor that has a masters or doctoral degree. You can ask to speak with a supervisor and set up a time to meet to find out if the site is a good match. Be sure to ask about what clearances you might need.

*-What if I called several sites and nobody is returning my calls?*

You may need to be persistent. Part of the practicum experiences is building professional development skills such as persistence and assertiveness. Keep calling back until you speak with someone who can answer your questions. You can always ask to speak with another supervisor or someone from Human Resources if the person you originally called isn't calling you back. Also, don't wait to start calling some other places just in case you still don't get an answer back.

*-Can it be part of paid work?*

On occasion an adult student who is already working in a human services organization requests doing their practicum in that location as they have a family and financial obligations making voluntary work impractical. These students can use their work site for practicum hours as long as it meets the same criteria of being relevant to psychology, having a well-trained, on-site supervisor, and completing 100 hours over the course of the semester.

*-Do I need clearances for working with kids?*

Yes. If you plan to work with children you need to submit a Child Abuse Clearance form as well as a Criminal Background Check (see Appendix A for instructions). In some settings you may have to obtain FBI fingerprints. Clearances can take up to 2 months to obtain, so get to these as soon as possible.

*-How am I to be insured?*

The University will provide insurance to all in practicum. You need to supply your location, address and supervisors name in your Learning Contract.

## Part 2: Once You're Started

*-What does it mean to set goals and learning objectives?*

Once you start your practicum and are about 8-10 hours into it, you should sit with your field supervisor and establish the goals you would like to achieve and document them on the Goals and Objectives Form (see Appendix E). You should supply a copy of these goals to your field supervisor and Dr. Nordstrom.

*-Who evaluates my work?*

Fifty percent of your grade will come from your field supervisor's evaluation of your experience. The form for completing this is on your syllabus (see Appendix E). The other fifty percent involves your campus supervisor who assesses your seminar attendance/participation (15%), your logs (10%), your literature reviews (10%) and your capstone paper (15%).

*-What are the requirements to complete it?*

1) Attending seminar – This seminar meets biweekly and your grade is based both on attendance and participation. Because there are only about 8 meetings a semester, it is critical that everyone attends all meetings. More than one absence for any reason will result in a lower grade.

2) Keeping a log – You are required to maintain a reflective log of your experience in practicum to report on your daily activities, explain how your daily tasks relate to psychology, and reflect on your internal emotions and experiences. You are urged to employ psychological theories, concepts and terms in your log entries. See Appendix C for a copy of the practicum log. You should complete one log entry per visit to your practicum site. You will be asked to turn in your logs at several points during the semester. You will want to complete them in a timely manner so that you don't forget what you did that day and your thoughts don't blend together.

3) Article presentations: – Each student will present two articles in their group meetings over the course of the semester. These articles should be scholarly in nature and should reflect both theoretical and empirical studies. You should read it and make notes, summaries, and questions for discussion for your campus supervisor and colleagues. Your articles should be relevant to your practicum placement.

4) Submit a capstone paper – This capstone paper should address what you learned, the extent to which your goals were met and whether or not you would recommend this site to future psychology majors. The paper is turned in at the end of the semester

5) Performance evaluation – Your on-site supervisor will be asked to complete an evaluation of your performance (see Appendix D) and submit it to your practicum supervisor. The on-site supervisors are encouraged to review their feedback of you before submitting the evaluation sheet so that you can hear their comments directly.

*-Who is eligible to supervise me?*

A person with a masters or doctorate in a field relevant to your site. In some rare cases (e.g., parole/probation) where all have bachelor level degrees, an exception is made; however, the person must have significant job experience (e.g., 10-15 years).

*-What is a Learning Contract?*

To better insure your needs will be met, a Learning Contract is to be signed by both you and your field supervisor outlining what is expected of both parties. A copy of this contract is appended to this document as Appendix F

### **Part 3: Ongoing issues**

*-What do I do if I don't like my practicum site?*

If you do not like going to your practicum site you should contact your campus supervisor immediately. If you do this early enough a new location can be attained. If you reach this conclusion later in the semester you may wish to do 50 hours at the first location, and another 50 hours at a new location.

*-What if my supervisor gives me too much or too little to do?*

If your field supervisor provides you with an under stimulating environment you should first discuss this issue with him/her. If nothing changes you should contact your campus supervisor immediately. If you are given too much work to do the same process applies. Contact your field supervisor first, then your campus supervisor.

*-What if my learning goals are not taken seriously?*

If, after completing the learning contract, you find that your field supervisor is not providing you with activities that align with your goals, you should first discuss this with your field supervisor. If a positive resolution is not reached, contact your campus supervisor to help determine your options.

*-What if I am just given high school level work?*

If you determine you are not being taken seriously and are given tasks that do not require you to employ your college degree you should see your field supervisor immediately. If nothing changes as a result of this meeting contact your campus supervisor.

*- What if I really like my practicum site. How will other students find out about it?*

You will be asked to complete a Practicum Site Form at the end of the semester.

You can find a review of all the practicum policies and course requirements in the PSY 475 syllabus (Appendix B). You can download a copy of the syllabus, goals and objectives form, and learning contract from the Psychology Department website at [http://www.misericordia.edu/misericordia\\_pg\\_sub.cfm?sub\\_page\\_id=350&subcat\\_id=108&page\\_id=288#practicum](http://www.misericordia.edu/misericordia_pg_sub.cfm?sub_page_id=350&subcat_id=108&page_id=288#practicum)

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Directions for Security Clearances for Practicum Sites

Appendix B: Syllabus

Appendix C: Practicum Log

Appendix D: Field Supervisor Assessment Form

Appendix E: Student Goals and Objectives Form & Sample Practicum Goals

Appendix F: Student Learning Contract

## Appendix A: Directions for Security Clearances for Practicum Sites

You can download applications for these three types of clearances on the Psychology Department website at:

[http://www.misericordia.edu/misericordia\\_pg\\_sub.cfm?sub\\_page\\_id=350&subcat\\_id=108&page\\_id=288#practicum](http://www.misericordia.edu/misericordia_pg_sub.cfm?sub_page_id=350&subcat_id=108&page_id=288#practicum)

### Clearances:

**Two forms must be secured if you are working with children.** They are:

- 1) Criminal Record Check (see attached form)
- 2) Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance (see attached form)

**\* In addition to these two clearances, you may need to obtain an FBI clearance if your practicum site makes it necessary. In this case you will need to obtain fingerprints from the local police department to send in with the clearance form.**

### 1. CRIMINAL CHECK

The criminal check can be completed very quickly with use of a credit/debit card (\$10.00 cost). The web site is: <http://epatch.state.pa.us>. In most cases, the result is immediate so please be sure you have a printer connected to your computer. If you receive a “pending” notice or if you will need additional copies of your clearance, it is important that you have the following information to gain access to the criminal clearance: (1) the control number assigned to your application, (2) how you entered your name (i.e., whether you used a middle name or initial), and (3) the date of your application for printing your clearance. You can print copies whenever needed, as long as you have this information.

Once you see the screen that tells you that you either “Have a Record” or “Have no Record”, you click the control number. On the next screen, click “Certification Form”. This will lead you to the official clearance that is to be printed.

### 2. CHILD ABUSE CLEARANCE

To secure a child abuse clearance (a \$10.00 money order is required; no check or cash is accepted), you must complete the form and submit it through the mail. Instructions and the application can be found at:

<http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/findaform/childabusehistoryclearanceforms/index.htm>

Click on the link to the *CY113 form* midway through the introductory page, which is where you will find the application. **It has been confirmed with the PA Department of Public Welfare that the block that asks for Reason for the Request for Clearance should be checked beside the one for “child care”.** Please be aware that while the instructions state that the results of the clearance will be mailed within 14 days, it often takes at least 3 weeks, so it’s important to complete and mail the clearance request as soon as possible.

**PLEASE NOTE: If you are an out-of-state student, you should use your campus address for all submissions.**

### 3. FBI Clearance:

**\*if your practicum site needs an FBI clearance from you, you must complete all forms and include a fingerprint card, as well as payment\***

**The Cogent System is an FBI fingerprinting service with digital scanning of fingerprints.**

Registration for Cogent System Fingerprinting:

First, you must register with Cogent Systems at <http://www.pa.cogentid.com>. Then, you may choose to visit any site for fingerprinting - there are no restrictions based on your home address. However, some fingerprinting sites require an appointment to be made. Visit <http://www.pa.cogentid.com> and look under "Print Locations and Hours" for more information. While online registration is the preferred method of registering, telephone registration can also be completed by calling 1-888-439-2486.

Payment arrangements must be made prior to having fingerprinting completed. Upon arriving to the site, you must have paid in advance online or brought a money order or cashier's check with you in order to have your prints completed. Money orders can be obtained at the on campus Post Office, located in the Bank Student Life Center.

\*\*\*\*\*

Payment for fingerprinting is the responsibility of the student.

\*\*\*\*\*

**\*\*\*\*PLEASE CHOOSE THE PA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE\*\***



Department of Public Welfare (DPW)

Nursing students, child care facility operators/staff,  
social service workers, hospital personnel,  
librarians, doctors, etc

#### **Where do I register for fingerprinting?**

Registration is best conducted online at <http://www.pa.cogentid.com>. This way you can insure the correctness of all demographic information you submit. Registration involves collecting pertinent demographic information that is required by law from each applicant. During registration you will also be given the chance to pay electronically for your background check. Online registration alleviates many data collection problems and effectively speeds processing at the fingerprint site.

You may also register by phone at 1-888-439-2486.

After going to "Register Online" in the drop down box in "Reason for Fingerprinting" choose:

Employment with a significant likelihood of regular contact with children

#### **Where are the fingerprint locations in my area?**

There are fingerprint service sites established across the State. Fingerprint sites hours of operations and procedures

may differ from site to site. Please review the Cogent Systems web site at <http://www.pa.cogentid.com> often and the site specific web page (if provided) to learn more about the site nearest you.

**To obtain an FBI Clearance at the local Intermediate Unit in Kingston, PA:**

1. Call the Luzerne County Intermediate Unit #18 and make an appointment for fingerprinting (570-718-4649).
2. Go to this website and follow the instructions to register online (be sure to print the form at the end and bring with you to your appointment)  
<http://www.liu18.org/index.php/programs/fbi-fingerprinting>
3. The cost is \$18 so be prepared to pay online by credit card.

\* Please make sure to check with your practicum site beforehand to find out what clearances are necessary for you to do your internship\*

## Appendix B: Practicum Syllabus

### Misericordia University College of Professional Studies and Social Sciences

**Course Title:** Practicum in Psychology

**Catalog Number:** PSY 475

**Credits:** 3

**Course Description:** Work experience in a setting where Psychology is applied. Can be used to further career exploration or promote transition to the work place.

#### **Goals:**

- 1) Give upper level students in psychology the opportunity to gain first hand experience in a setting where psychology is applied
- 2) Facilitate the integration of theory and practice in some area of applied psychology
- 3) Give the psychology major the opportunity to observe and critique the structures, processes and relative efficiency of psychology when applied to real life problems
- 4) Give psychology majors the opportunity to develop specific skills in a setting of applied psychology.
- 5) To promote professional development in students to prepare them for a work environment.

#### **Objectives:**

- 1) Students will complete 100 hours of work in a community setting related to Psychology
- 2) Students will independently select and arrange for their Practicum placements
- 3) Students will identify the goals and objectives to define the outcomes of their Practicum learning experience
- 4) Students and their supervisors will complete a Student Learning Contract to define the student's daily tasks and agree upon supervisor responsibilities
- 5) Students will attend bi-weekly team meetings with other students to process their experiences
- 6) Students will conduct a literature search using a Psychology research database and present two research articles to their
- 7) Students will complete reflection journals after each site visit to process their thoughts and feelings about their activities and connect their experiences to concepts in Psychology
- 8) Students will write a final reflection paper evaluating their sites and assessing to the degree to which they achieved their learning goals and objectives
- 9) Students will practice effective communication skills and ethical conduct with their supervisors and clientele
- 10) Students will demonstrate critical thinking and observation skills and application of psychological concepts through team meeting discussions and reflection journals

**Implementation Techniques:** Students who wish a practicum need to express this at pre-registration the semester before the semester they wish to complete the practicum. The psychology department will make initial contact with prospective practicum providers, and the students will be asked to visit the site to meet with their prospective supervisor to determine goals for the practicum, mutual expectations, types of activities and responsibilities involved in the practicum and so on. Students will meet at the practicum location for at least 100 hours. In addition to working at the practicum site, students will be asked to: keep a log summarizing their experiences, conduct a literature search in order to locate resources to aid in

the implementation of their practicum, meet at least biweekly with the faculty member sponsoring the practicum, and complete a paper as a capstone to the experience.

**Prerequisites:** Majoring or minoring in psychology and junior level status (at least 60 credit hours completed).

**General Course Requirements:**

<u>Requirement</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date Due</u>	<u>Value</u>
Practicum	Minimum 100 hours in field as assessed by field supervisor	Ongoing	50%
Practicum Log	Ongoing, submitted bi-weekly	Ongoing	10%
Review of Literature	Search for resources to aid in completing the practicum	3 <sup>rd</sup> Week	10%
Capstone Paper	Paper summarizing the practicum experience	14 <sup>th</sup> Week	15%
Seminar with Supervisor	Bi-weekly meeting with faculty	Ongoing	15%

**Practicum Setting, Supervision and Assessment:** The primary supervisor at your practicum setting will set goals with you, assign you your responsibilities at your practicum, meet with you regularly to discuss your progress and assess your performance both for developmental purposes, and for assigning you a grade.

**Practicum Log:** In this log you should focus on the psychological aspects of your practicum experience as well as reflect on the significant events, both positive and negative, you experience.

**Review of the Literature:** After your practicum goals have been established, you should use PsycArticles in our library to help you find resources for dealing with your practicum responsibilities. You are expected to copy the full articles you find most appropriate for your setting, read them and present them in seminar.

**Capstone Paper:** In this paper you should: 1) Focus on the extent to which your practicum goals have been met; 2) state what it is you learned in doing your practicum; and 3) evaluate your practicum site. Of course, this paper should be double-spaced and error free.

**Seminar with Faculty Supervisor:** It goes without saying that regular attendance at your practicum location is vital. Meetings with your faculty contact are also important for purposes of sharing how the practicum is going, solving unanticipated problems, bringing faculty insights to the challenges faced in the practicum. Where schedules allow, faculty will conduct these meetings with several practicum students so that you vicariously learn from the experiences of others and they from you.

**Grading System:** As can be observed in the course requirements listed above, half of your grade will depend on you performance at the practicum site as assessed by your on-site supervisor. The other half of your grade will be assessed by your on campus supervisor and will include your log, your literature search and how you plan to apply it, your attendance and participation at bi-weekly meetings and your capstone paper. Because all assessments will be subjective in nature, letter grades, not percentages will be awarded for each component.

**Attendance:** Failure to amass the required hours or to attend seminar at least 80% of the time will result in a reduction in the grade received for the practicum.

**Academic Integrity:** While other students may offer suggestions for your capstone paper draft, the final draft you submit for a grade must be your own work. Students who submit papers done by or copied from someone else will receive an F grade for that paper. A notice of all violations of this nature will be sent to the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs to be placed in a special file.

**Required Readings:** No text has been chosen for this experience. The review of the literature will provide information tailored to the issues you deal with in your practicum setting.

**Goals:** The purposes of the psychology practicum include:

- A) giving upper level students in psychology the opportunity to gain first hand experience in a setting where psychology is applied;
- B) facilitating the integration of theory and practice in some area of applied psychology;
- C) helping the psychology major to better appreciate the appropriateness of their career goals;
- D) giving the psychology major the opportunity to observe and critique the structures, processes and relative efficiency of psychology when applied to real life problems; and
- E) giving the psychology major the opportunity to develop specific skills in a setting of applied psychology.

**Objectives:** Since this practicum is not geared toward content mastery, but rather toward providing a practical, career-related experience, behavioral objectives are not seen as appropriate. Instead, students will set location specific goals with their supervisors early in the practicum experience.

**Means of Evaluation:** Your performance at the practicum location will be assessed by your practicum supervisor on a form we supply (see attached). The quality of your log, literature review, capstone paper and participation in seminar will be assessed by your faculty supervisor.

### Appendix C: Practicum Log

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Hours in agency: \_\_:\_\_ to \_\_:\_\_ Total time spent today: \_\_\_\_\_

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Activity: List your activities and the amount of time spent at each.

Describe how what you did or observed today relates to psychology.

Discuss your thoughts and feelings about the day's experience below.

**Appendix D: Field Supervisor Assessment Form**

**Misericordia University  
Psychology Program  
Practicum Evaluation Form**

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Practicum Setting \_\_\_\_\_

Practicum Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

State briefly the kinds of experiences the student has had this semester.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Strength:** Please comment on those student qualities that you think would lead to a helping career. Such qualities might include such areas as: ability to develop appropriate relationships, responsibility, motivation, appropriate use of agency staff and resources, sensitivity to others' needs, use of supervision, capacity for developing helping skills.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Areas Which Need Attention:** Please indicate those behaviors, values that need attention if the student is to be successful in a helping career. Feel free to suggest possible ways of constructively addressing any of these areas.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Overall Assessment:** Given the time constraints and the fact there is always some variance in a student's behavior during a semester, how would you assess his/her overall contribution to your organization?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Rate this student's performance on the following scale:

A Great  B+ Very Good  B Good  C+ Fairly Good  C Okay  D Weak  F Unacceptable

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

**Appendix E: Students Goals & Objectives**

MISERICORDIA UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICUM

**Goals and Objectives**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

## **Sample Practicum Goals and Objectives**

1. To learn more about how clients are treated at Step-by-step.
2. To learn what strategies are employed in treating clients at Milestones agency.
3. To learn more about how drug and alcohol problems are treated at Marworth.
4. To learn more about how a school psychologist employs psychological testing.
5. To determine the differences between a guidance counselor and school psychologist.
6. To learn more about what is entailed in Wrap-around Services at Children's Service Center.
7. To learn how those with autism and other pervasive developmental disorders differ from normal kids.
8. To learn how a probation department works and how they attempt to keep those they work with out of jail.
9. To learn what a case manager does and how they attempt to help others.
10. To learn what it is Human Resource personnel do and how I can apply my learning to that setting.
11. To observe how a school psychologist conducts assessment.
12. To assist a high school guidance counselor with mid-term reports
13. To run a group for adults with schizophrenia
14. To observe in-home visits with a Child and Youth Services caseworker
15. To assist the head of Human Resources at Mercy Center by checking references for employees

rev. 11/5/2012

**Appendix F: Student Learning Contract**

MISERICORDIA UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

**STUDENT LEARNING CONTRACT**

\_\_\_\_\_ will complete his/her Practicum experience  
(Student's Name)

for \_\_\_\_\_ total hours during the Fall or Spring (circle one) semester at:

**Name of site:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing address of site:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor name, degree, and field of degree (or years of experience in field):**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor's contact number:** (        ) \_\_\_\_\_

**Full name of person at site responsible for maintaining certificates of liability insurance:**

\_\_\_\_\_

As part of his/her practicum experience, the student will participate in and perform the following activities and tasks:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

### Supervisor's Responsibilities and Assignments

Supervisors play a critical role in the quality of the student's practicum experience. As part of this agreement, the supervisor agrees to complete the following responsibilities:

1. Provide students with an active learning experience that facilitates the student's observation of and/or hands-on involvement with others in a psychological or service capacity
2. Provide an orientation for the student to the agency's functions, procedures, and program facilities
3. Be accessible to the student for on-going, structured supervision
4. Provide the student with activities, including participation with agency clients and staff conferences/meetings
5. Provide the student with a place to work
6. Continually reassess student needs, degree of knowledge, and ways of learning
7. To evaluate the student's field experience at the end of the term in cooperation with the College course supervisor and the student, in terms of performance of assigned roles in the agency, not in terms of the student as a total personality
8. Contact the College course supervisor if any concerns about the student's performance arise

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Student Signature

Date

---

Supervisor Signature

Date

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Misericordia University Faculty Signature

Date