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. The official practicum semester always includes a set number of weeks and starts and ends at the beginning of a University semester. These dates can always be found on the Practicum Calendar for each student group. No student may start a 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.

A Modified Practicum is a practicum that is approved to begin before or ends after the official 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. In order to modify a practicum, students must present circumstances that legitimately require modification. Qualifying circumstances include examples such as health issues, extreme School related travel time during the practicum (for example, to attend field or integrative seminars), grants or pilot projects that start ahead of the practicum, and early site orientations or trainings that are a required part of the practicum.

Beginning the practicum early creates serious problems for both the student and the field instructor. Because of the significance of the information and training provided to students and instructors prior to and at the beginning of the practicum semester, some requests to begin a practicum early will not be approved. Similarly, extending the practicum beyond the close of the practicum semester will not be approved unless a faculty liaison is available for the duration of the practicum, and there is adequate field instructor supervision and suitable practicum activities which span the duration of the practicum.

Guidelines for the Modified Practicum

1. Proposals for 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 semester is 12 weeks in length.
2. Students may not be engaged in a practicum scheduled for less than 16 hours/week.
3. The modified practicum schedule cannot compromise agency services or the needs of clients in any way.
4. The designated field instructor must be fully informed and in total agreement with the proposed modified plan and all of its implications.
5. If the modified placement is beginning significantly early, the field instructor must have already attended a prior Field Practicum Contract Training for field instructors.
6. If the modified placement is beginning significantly early, the student will be required to meet with the designated faculty liaison, and develop the Field Practicum Contract within the number of weeks allowed in the Practicum Calendar. The Field Education Coordinator
Employment-based Practicum Placements (EBPP)

Many students enter the Anne and Henry Zarrow School of Social Work with considerable experiences in social, health and human services employment and volunteer organizations. These experiences can be invaluable in creating a base of understanding that will serve a student's development as a social worker. These experiences have often inspired a student to pursue a degree in social work.

The practicum requires that experienced students devote themselves to expanding and advancing their scope of social work practice. Prior employment and volunteer or other life experiences may not be credited toward practicum requirements. Recognizing the importance of field in the educational experience of social work students, the practicum stands as a substantial part of the curriculum. The practicum must offer students ample social work opportunities for expanding and integrating their experiences with new knowledge, and for developing the competencies they need in order to practice and advance in the social work profession. In keeping with these requirements, an important objective of the field education program is to secure for students who have worked, or who are currently working, a practicum experience that is different from the social service experiences they have acquired in their past or current jobs and organizational settings.

However, when special circumstances exist; the School's requirements are met; and required policy and procedures are followed, viable Employment-Based Practicum Placements (EBPP) proposals may be considered. Employment-based practicum placements are naturally vulnerable to compromising forces and conflicts of interest that can cloud the learning objectives of the practicum. Because of this, EBPP proposals will not be considered unless the employer, supervisor, and student can ensure that the student will benefit from educational experiences in the place of employment in the following ways:

- The student is offered relevant and challenging social work educational experiences that are different and separate from job responsibilities
- The planned practicum experiences represent new learning
- The student can achieve and demonstrate the learning requirements of the field education component of the School
- The site offers supervision that is separate and distinct from the supervision the student receives as an employee
- The job responsibilities of the student will not compromise the amount of time invested in the practicum and the fulfillment of the Field Practicum Contract; nor will the job responsibilities create a weekly schedule that compromises the student's chance of successful performance in the practicum
- The student's performance will be evaluated in terms of the Field Practicum Contract and practicum learning, as opposed to employee evaluation criteria.