

# **BSW Program Field Education Manual**



**Developed by the School of Social Work Bachelor of Social  
Work Program University of Victoria**

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## FACULTY AND STAFF

Please consult the School of Social Work website ([www.socialwork.uvic.ca](http://www.socialwork.uvic.ca)) for a current list of faculty and staff.

Contact Field Education via [swfield@uvic.ca](mailto:swfield@uvic.ca) or call 250-472-5109.

## Mission Statement

The emerging vision of the School of Social Work commits us to social justice, anti-oppressive social work practices, and to promoting critical enquiry that respects the diversity of knowing and being.

Our **educational** mission is to prepare generalist social work practitioners skilled in critical self-reflection and in working with individuals, families, groups and communities. In particular, we endeavour to prepare Indigenous social workers and child welfare practitioners and we emphasise structural, feminist, Indigenous and Anti-Oppressive analyses

Our **scholarly** mission is to share and create collective knowledge and understanding through engaging in critical enquiry, and by supporting research and innovative curriculum development at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Our **practice** mission is to act on social justice issues through community change initiatives and Anti-Oppressive social work.

In all our activities, we aspire to create a supportive environment that promotes equity, respect, responsibility, curiosity, collaboration, flexibility, risk-taking and creativity. We support inter-disciplinary collaboration. We seek to provide accessible and flexible social work education and we are committed to working across differences, such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, class, abilities, and sexual orientation.

# SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

## 1.1 Field Education: What is it?

Field education provides the opportunity to apply what the student has learned in the other courses in the Social Work degree program to a practice situation. The focus of the program is on Anti-Oppressive Practice through an analysis of power differences related to gender, age, race, ethnicity, class, abilities and sexual orientation. The goal is to develop critically reflective generalist social work practitioners, who are able to assess and respond to human problems at both an individual and a structural level.

Field education experience is intended to build upon practice and previous experience, and to provide opportunities to strengthen skills, knowledge, and understanding of current values and attitudes. In particular, placements are sought in agencies which offer a varied practice (e.g., working with individuals, groups, families, community involvement, and organizational change); exposure to inter-professional teamwork, nontraditional approaches to practice and innovative settings for social workers. The field education practicum is not just another work experience. It should provide the opportunity to be reflective, and to apply theory to practice in an evaluative, disciplined manner.

**Students in the Indigenous and Child Welfare Specializations follow a specific course design, but all specializations include two practicums – one in third year and one in fourth. Specialization students are instructed to consult the specialization coordinators for information specific to course planning and practicum requirements.**

In all aspects of the program, field education in fourth year is intended to complement and build upon the student's third year placement.

## 1.2 Course Objectives and Principles

### 1.2.1 Course Objectives

The overall purpose of the practicum is the application of Anti-Oppressive theory and knowledge to social work practice and the concurrent development of Anti-Oppressive Practice skills. The following are general objectives. Each student is also expected to develop their own specific learning objectives.

- To develop the ability to engage in and integrate critical self-reflection.
- To engage in critical inquiry.
- To develop the ability to articulate and critique various relations of power.
- To strengthen understanding of, and ability to engage with, Indigenous communities and concerns.
- To strengthen understanding of, and commitment to, social justice.
- To develop the ability to effectively engage in Anti-Oppressive Practice.
- To develop the ability to work effectively as a generalist practitioner.
- To develop the ability to engage with and apply social work values and ethics.

In addition to these general objectives, there may be additional specific objectives for practicum students in the Indigenous and Child Welfare Specializations.

## 1.2.2 Course Principle

The principles of field education practice are that:

- The service needs of the consumer must take precedence over the learning needs of students, when the two are in conflict.
- Within the limitations of a practicum, students are expected to carry a reasonable workload and are not to be unduly protected.
- Equal importance must be given both to the acquisition of knowledge and to the practice of skills, as in other courses. Students will be expected to learn from the wisdom of colleagues and consumers as well as from academic sources.
- Field practice should be an individualized course, with a particular opportunity for students to develop self-initiated learning. Students should identify their learning needs, optimum learning methods, and seek to achieve personal and professional learning objectives.
- The agency accepts the student as a developing professional social worker and will not use students to meet staffing needs nor withhold appropriate assignments because of student status.
- Field education agencies are selected by the agency's congruence with the goals of the School of Social Work and by the ability of the agency to offer the student the variety, range, and intensity of experience to achieve these goals.

## 1.3 Practicum is Completed in One Agency

Each practicum is normally completed in one agency only. This is based on the principle that the student needs the time to observe and practice in order to gain competence and a sense of confidence.

If for any reason a student must leave a practicum the replacement practicum must be of sufficient length for an adequate learning experience to take place and for the student to be evaluated. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the student can move to an alternate practicum and simply complete the remaining hours.

Usually this would mean at least 80% of the time in the practicum would need to be completed following a move.

If a move is required for whatever reason, the student must engage in termination with the first agency in a respectful manner, before moving on to a new placement.

Any difficulties in practicum need to be discussed with the faculty liaison.

The School will attempt within its mandated area to arrange for appropriate field education practicum to meet student's personal circumstances. Where feasible, students in the program may complete both their third year practicum and their fourth year practicum in the geographic area of their choice. International practicum are reserved for 4year students only.

## 1.4 Social Work 304A- Prior Learning Assessment

Those students who enter the program with significant social work or social justice experience may elect to complete SOCW 304 (third year practicum) through Prior Learning Assessment, (PLA) rather than a field placement. The 304A student, after receiving permission from the Practicum Team to proceed, prepares a portfolio or completes an online course demonstrating the learning they have gained from their previous experience. Credit may be granted after an assessment process and the student receives 4.5 units of credit for Social Work 304A. The student's permanent computer record will show that this practicum was

obtained through a Prior Learning Assessment. For more information on completing the third year practicum by Prior Learning Assessment, please see <http://www.uvic.ca/hsd/socialwork/home/home/practicum-agency/index.php> .

You have registered to complete your third year practicum by Prior Learning Assessment. These are the steps you must complete before you can continue:

- In order to complete the practicum in this manner you need to have two years of paid or unpaid social work experience in the last five years. Approximately 4000 hours if the work was part time. **Working with people is not in and of itself social work.**
- You need to submit an online application found at <http://web.uvic.ca/~socwde/pla/>. Include your resume with your application. If the work that you were involved in would not be universally readily known, please include a job description with your resume.
- The Practicum Team needs to approve your application before you proceed.
- If you do not have sufficient work experience, you may register in a section of Social Work 304 and proceed to practicum without penalty.

### 1.4.1 Social Work 304A Pre-requisites

Social Work 304A is a 4.5 unit course to be completed after the student has been admitted to the program and completed all pre-requisites listed in the current calendar AND approval has been confirmed that a student qualifies to proceed.

#### ***Block or Part Time Placement: Which One is Best for You?***

*Field Education may be completed in a block (full-time) placement or on a part-time basis. A student must complete a minimum of 14 hours per week and must complete the practicum within 30 weeks to meet the expectations of the part-time placement.*

*Both block and part-time placements have advantages and disadvantages. A block placement will give the student an opportunity to experience the full cycle of an agency work week and maximize the opportunity to be an integral part of the workplace.*

### 1.5 Social Work 304- First Level Practicum

Third year practicum (Social Work 304) is a 4.5 unit course to be completed after the student has been admitted to the program and completed all pre-requisites listed in the current calendar (unit value dependent on the year the program was commenced).

The required time period for Social Work 304 is 350 hours (4.5 units).

On the assumption that a working day is seven hours, (for example, 9:00am to 5:00pm with an hour for lunch), a full-time practicum would be completed over a period of 45 days or 9 weeks.

Once a year, Social Work 304 is offered on a part-time basis from September to April only. As part of both the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year agency based practicum there is an Integrative Practice Seminar. The seminar may be

offered online or face to face depending on liaison preference and availability. Students will be notified if a face to face option is available but may always select an online seminar.

## **1.6 Social Work 402/404/404A- Second Level Practicum**

Fourth year practicum (Social Work 402/404/404A) is a 4.5 unit course to be commenced after all pre-requisites have been completed. Check the most recent calendar for pre-requisites and discuss sequence of your final practicum with the academic advisor well in advance. Not all pre-requisites are offered in each semester.

The required time period for the fourth year practicum is 350 hours. There is an Integrative Practice Seminar as part of the requirement for the practicum.

Some practica are only available for students who can complete it over one semester.

Students must be able to attend weekdays during usual business hours (8am-5pm) and should not expect to be able to complete their placement on evening and weekends.

## **1.7 Field Education for Indigenous Specialization**

### **Social Work 304 or 304A and 402**

This specialization is a concentration within the BSW program and its intent is to create opportunities for Indigenous BSW students to focus their undergraduate program on preparing for leadership roles as helpers in Indigenous communities.

Students will have significant opportunity to learn with other Indigenous students and faculty in the School.

This specialization will encourage Indigenous students to:

- Explore and affirm their own indigenous identity.
- Work alongside Indigenous human service workers, political leaders and Elders.
- Build a knowledge base that is informed by Indigenous ways of knowing, learning, being, helping.
- Balance the structural, feminist and Anti-Oppressive social work perspectives available through courses that prepare all BSW students to work with diverse populations of students, faculty and community groups.

This specialization is limited to Indigenous, Métis and Inuit students (or by permission of the Director). Some indigenous agencies may accept non-indigenous students. Students will be advised by their coordinator how to express interest in an indigenous placement.

### **1.7.1 Field Education for Indigenous Child Welfare Specialization**

#### **Social Work 304 or 304A and 404 or 404A**

This specialization is designed for those students who are following the Indigenous Social Work Specialization and who wish to include within it a preparation for child welfare work in Indigenous communities. The School has worked closely with the Caring for First Nations Children Society in the creation of this specialization. It combines courses from the Indigenous and Child Welfare Specializations.

## **1.8 Field Education for Child Welfare Specialization**

### **Social Work 304 or 304A and 404 or 404A**

The Child Welfare Specialization is a program of studies that prepares students for child protection and/or child welfare work in government and other settings, while also satisfying the general practice criteria that are required for BSW accreditation and entry into the profession of social work. Students enrolled in the Child Welfare Specialization will do their fourth year practicum in a Child Protection (404) or Child Welfare (404A) setting.

A Child Protection (404) practicum must be completed in an approved child protection agency under the direction of a child protection social worker.

A Child Welfare (404A) practicum may be completed in an approved government or community agency involved in the support of children and families. Agencies must be pre-approved by the Field Education Coordinator to ensure all learning objectives for the SOCW 404A placement can be met.

The minimum pre-requisites are listed in the current version of the calendar. Please note that some pre-requisites and co-requisites may not be offered every semester so plan accordingly to ensure all preparatory work is complete before applying for SOCW 404 or SOCW 404A.

All students anticipating completing the CWS specializations will be expected to work closely with the CWS coordinator to plan their placements.

## **1.9 International Practicum Placements**

### **International Placements are considered on an individual basis for fourth year practicum only.**

International placements need careful thought and much planning. It is not unusual to begin planning a year ahead of time in order to ensure that the placement will happen and will be successful. International placements are usually available for fourth year practicum only.

Some of the things that students need to think about are:

- What are your particular interests in an International placement? This is not a tourist opportunity and needs to be undertaken for educational reasons. Often students are returning to a culture and geography that they or their parents were part of, and that has its own special challenges.
- What are your language skills? It has been found that without an understanding of the language of the street, your ability to integrate and come away with a positive learning experience can be severely limited.
- How resilient are you? Practicum in a place far from the familiar can be trying, exhausting, and you need to be able to expect the unexpected and thrive.

As in any other placement, once an agency has been vetted for their interest in working with social work students from UVic, we will forward your resume and begin a dialogue around a possible contract for

work. This is all done prior to students leaving to ensure that the placement will be what we all thought it would be.

There are many things to think about when considering an international placement. Here is what a student told us when she returned:

*I had traveled extensively before, so was prepared for the trials and tribulations of a third world country ... or so I thought. The practicum experience was much harder than any travel I have done. When traveling, I am on vacation! I am a tourist! If I don't like the room I am staying in, I have the option of choosing another touristy type of accommodation. I can roam from tourist attraction to tourist attraction and when I get bored, I just move on. In contrast, the practicum experience I had was not a "touristy" experience. I lived, worked, and breathed the community development project the entire time, without a single day off to call my own. I was touched and moved by people in a country very different from mine. The emotional roller coaster never seemed to stop for a rest. It was really hard going, but I am a better person for sticking this through to the end.*

*I really felt the frustration of illiteracy, the language of the country was written with Arabic script, so I could not read, write or speak!!! I spoke with little English words and used sign language a lot! The frustration of communication took me to the brink of tears sometimes. Before I left home, I imagined myself counseling the women and really getting to know them. Unfortunately most of the clients I dealt with had little education, which meant that they spoke little English. I really questioned whether I could practice "Social Work" when I couldn't communicate on a personal level with the clients I felt, first hand, what it is like to be a visible minority. Next to language barriers, this was the thing I liked least about the practicum experience I was so tired of being stared at by people that I bought an umbrella to hide under. And don't forget humidity plus rain plus heat equals bugs! Don't go to a tropical environment particularly if you can't handle scaring things out of the bathroom every night!!!*

*Christine Bennett*

# SECTION II: FINDING A PRACTICUM

## 2.1 Participants in the Practicum Process

**The student** carries responsibility for her/his professional development as a social worker. It is expected that the student will take an active part in defining her/his learning needs and assessing and prioritizing agencies at which these can best be met.

**The field education coordinator** (also called the practicum coordinator) provides the liaison between the agency, the student, and the School of Social Work. S/he is also responsible for the non-academic administrative component of the practicum.

**The faculty instructor (liaison)** is a University of Victoria, School of Social Work professor and is the person responsible for the academic component of the practicum. S/he marks any required student assignments and submits the grade for the overall practicum.

**The agency supervisor** (also called the practicum supervisor) is the individual in the setting where the student is placed who provides the day-to-day, practicum supervision of the student. This is also the person who establishes the tasks and responsibilities that are to be assigned to the student.

**The consultant social worker** provides additional social work support to students in placements where the supervisor does not have a social work degree.

### 2.1.1 The Field Education Coordinator

Provides information to students, liaisons and field supervisors regarding the expectations and process involved in social work practice education. Their role is one of education and administration. In consultation with faculty, s/he will make the arrangements with existing and new practicum agencies for the placement of students. This includes:

- Assisting students to find suitable agencies
- Confirming who will supervise the student.
- Providing the agency with information about the School as a whole, and field education procedures and evaluation methods in particular, and remaining available to the agency for consultation.
- Providing students with information about placements and how to apply. Discussing students' their learning needs and interests.
- Informing students how to apply for practicum placements.
- Participating with student and agency supervisor in completion of the practicum contract for a new agency, where appropriate.
- Ensuring that the agency is aware of and has access to resources or programs of the School.
- Reviewing completion of pre-placement requirements (criminal record clearance, immunization, confidentiality agreements etc.)
- Prepare and monitor affiliation agreements and other relevant insurance policies
- Develop, monitor and evaluate all aspects of practica placements

## 2.1.2 Faculty Instructor (Liaison)

Each course at the University has an instructor. The field education faculty instructor (liaison) has the following major responsibilities:

- Generate a letter of introduction for distribution to students and agencies.
- Initiate an introductory telephone contact with students and agency supervisors.
- Establish and maintain “office hours” to provide ongoing one-on-one phone/email consultation on a weekly basis for the duration of the term.
- Provide proactive facilitation for the Integrative Practice Seminar.
- Serve as a resource person and facilitator of student learning to ensure that the student’s learning opportunities are maximized.
- Liaise with the agency supervisor, acting as a consultant and an ambassador of the School of Social Work.
- Initiate and develop significant meetings, either in person or by teleconference with the agency supervisor and student over the course of the practicum. It is suggested that these contacts occur **at least** at the beginning during the contracting and orientation phase, at the mid-point, where issues for work need to be identified, and at the end where we need to bring together the threads from the placement for student, agency and school.
- Submit final grade sheet to the School within seven days of the last day of classes/course.

At a distance these functions may be achieved primarily through e-mail and telephone consultation, although the faculty instructor (liaison) may be available for a face to face consultation if required. Scheduled telephone conferences will take place around evaluation time.

The School of Social Work also endeavours to have an Indigenous faculty person available for Indigenous students.

## 2.1.3 Agency Supervisor

The agency supervisor facilitates the students’ learning within the agency. They are the direct link for both the student and the School of Social Work with the agency, as well as the principle learning resource for the student. The agency supervisor will:

- Prepare a general proposal, outlining tasks and responsibilities a student would undertake if placed in the agency; the skills and knowledge the student should bring and would acquire in the placement and share these with the student and the liaison.
- Complete the practicum contract with the participation of the student and field education coordinator, where appropriate. The contract should spell out as specifically as possible the planned tasks and responsibilities of the student. It should also include a statement of the anticipated supervision pattern, hours of work, and anticipated supervision times.
- Arrange for orientation of the student to the agency during the first week of the practicum.
- Ensure that practicum contract commitments are carried through and initiate change in the contract if it is appropriate.
- Ensure appropriate supervision and consultation for the student.
- Prepare the interim and final evaluation on the students’ progress.
- Maintain contact with the faculty instructor (liaison), and particularly bring to his or her attention any questions, dissatisfactions, or suggestions respecting the student or policies of the School.

- In the event of an absence longer than one week, the agency supervisor shall designate an appropriate alternate and notify the student and faculty instructor (liaison) of this temporary change.

## 2.1.4 The Student

The student carries responsibility for her or his professional development as a social worker. The School of Social Work is part of the Faculty of Human and Social Development. Please review the Faculty for Human and Social Development Guidelines for Professional Conduct found here:

<http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2016-09/undergrad/hsd/regulations.html#>

It is expected that the student will:

- Take an active part in defining her/his learning needs and assessing and prioritizing agencies at which these can best be met.
- Participate responsibly in the development of a practicum contract with the agency and faculty instructor (liaison).
- Share responsibility with the agency supervisor to ensure that adequate supervision occurs.
- Maintain contact with the faculty instructor (liaison) as to assignments and developments in the practicum.
- Negotiate with the agency supervisor any make-up time required and notify the faculty instructor (liaison) of arrangements. (Students are allowed two days leave in the term for illness without a make-up requirement).

## 2.2 Finding a Practicum: Some Tips on Locating Agencies

Securing a practicum placement is hard work. As such and in accordance with the Faculty of Human Development Regulations Concerning Practica found at: <http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2016-09/undergrad/hsd/regulations.html#> please note the following:

### General Practicum Policies

The faculty reserves the right to approve any agency or institution that provides placements for student practica, and to change any placement assigned to a student. The student, however, has the right to be informed in writing of the reasons for any change in placement. The faculty accepts responsibility to provide sufficient practicum placements within a student's program. Availability of practicums requires a signed Practicum Placement Agreement. Access to practicums is competitive and may be limited based on availability, geographic location and specialization. A student may be required to withdraw from a practicum course if none of the available practicum agencies will accept the student.

What follows here is intended to provide some ideas about how to locate suitable agencies in your community, how to select a potential practicum site, and how to approach it

We ask that all work with the practicum coordinators in arranging placements with agencies on the Student Database. When you are assigned a Coordinator you will receive instructions relevant to your geographical location. If you already have an agency in mind, you will be able to communicate this to your Coordinator through the application process. See the website for details ([www.socialwork.uvic.ca](http://www.socialwork.uvic.ca))

For those students completing their degree by distance, please **do not** contact your local University for assistance. Your Coordinator may connect you with a local field coordinator but always start with your UVic Coordinator first.

### 2.2.1 How to Locate Potential Agencies

All students are encouraged to talk to their practicum coordinator first.

Here are some hints on how to start:

- Most communities have a social service directory that lists local human service organizations. Usually these handbooks provide basic information about the purpose and function of each agency listed, who is served, and contact information. In order to find out where to obtain these handbooks, you might phone agencies that are likely to be using them (Ministry of Children and Families offices, hospital social work departments, volunteer organizations, etc.), or ask at your public library. You can usually find directories of social service agencies for your community online as well.
- Discussion with the Human Resource Departments in federal ministries (e.g., Department of Veterans Affairs) and provincial ministries (e.g., Ministry of Children and Families (MCF)) might yield possible practicum sites within the government sector. (Refer to the blue pages in your phone book). **Please be advised that Child Welfare Specialization students receive first consideration for MCF Child Protection placements in BC.**
- The yellow pages in your local telephone directory will usually have listings under “Social Services” that can yield possible placement sites.
- People in your personal network may be able to provide ideas or leads. Visit organizations in your community, collect brochures, business cards and suggestions to discuss with your coordinator.
- The Student Database is accessed by a password that will be sent to you once you have completed the online application for a practicum  
<http://www.uvic.ca/hsd/socialwork/assets/docs/practicum/practiumapplication.html> .

### 2.2.2 Identifying Your Learning Goals

Before you select the agencies you will consider for placement you first want to consider your experience, current knowledge and skills, your learning needs, and your personal circumstances.

You might begin by considering your past experience first, in order to identify areas you feel competent in and those you wish to expand upon. A simple way of doing this is to examine your own resume.

### **2.2.3 Where Have You Worked?**

What kind of organizations (bureaucratic, unstructured, or etc.) have you been involved with, either in a paid capacity or as a volunteer? What have your responsibilities been? What kind of supervision have you had? Have you mostly worked independently (e.g., crisis line worker) or as part of a team (e.g., group home worker)? What models of practice and philosophies have been prevalent in the agencies where you have worked or volunteered (e.g. feminist, medical model, etc.)?

### **2.2.4 What Areas of Knowledge and Skill Have You Developed?**

What areas do you feel you have a working knowledge of (e.g. substance abuse, adoption, etc.)? What populations have you worked with (involuntary clients, children, etc.)? What skills have you developed (e.g. eligibility assessment crisis intervention, etc.)? What methods have you used (e.g. individual, telephone only, etc.)?

### **2.2.5 Reflect on What You Have Learned From Your Resume**

By now you should have a good sense of areas you feel comfortable in. Return to your notes and think about areas you might wish to deepen your knowledge in, or skills you would like to extend. Think about the type of organization structures and cultures you have worked in and how you have felt about the fit with your own learning style. You may note that you feel more comfortable in the highly structured setting you have worked in than in the more informal ones. It may strike you that you have only observed one approach to working with, for example substance abuse, although you are aware of other perspectives.

### **2.2.6 Identify Gaps in Your Experience**

What areas of interest would you like to pursue? What new skills would you like to learn? Are there value or ethical issues you wish to test out or strengthen through your field education? Do you want to challenge your comfort level by working in an agency that has a different structure or culture than you have generally experienced?

### **2.2.7 Outline Your Learning Goals**

At this point you should have a fairly clear idea of what you would like your practicum to look like. List your learning goals concretely under the headings of knowledge, and skills that you hope to achieve. Make a few notes about the kind of setting you would like to work in, and the type of supervision that you think you would most benefit from.

### **2.2.8 What are Your Personal Circumstances?**

Some agencies will only consider full-time block placements. Are you looking for a part-time practicum?

## 2.2.9 Availability

How many hours a week can you do over how many weeks? What hours of work can you do—are you available on weekends or evenings? Do you have a car if that is required? Do you have any special needs that must be considered?

## 2.3 Suggestions for Experienced Students

All students enter the program with a variety of life, volunteer, academic and paid experience. Some students have extensive experience in one or more areas of social services. These students are encouraged to step totally outside their present knowledge base and try an area of social work unfamiliar to them. Practicum is a time to discover, to reach for new learning and explore different aspects of our diverse profession. The School will assist students to tailor practicum to suit individual needs. Experienced students may embark on a variety of senior practicum activities, for example:

- Community development work for a new community resource.
- Teaching at a community college in a Social Service Worker program.
- Revitalizing a branch of your local Social Work professional organization
- Developing workshops and training fellow social workers.
- Working in policy and administration, planning and research.

Students in their fourth year practicum may consider a research practicum within a field agency. They should also ensure that someone in the agency will be able to continue with the research after the practicum is completed. Unless the student has a significant research background, the current UVic School of Social Work research course will be considered a pre-requisite for a research based practicum.

Students with significant social work/ social change experience may also wish to challenge the first practicum. Prior Learning Assessment is available for Social Work 304 only. For more information on this option, please see the PLA Section 1.4 in this manual and online at:

<https://www.uvic.ca/hsd/socialwork/current/bsw/practice/index.php>

## 2.4 Selecting Your Practicum Agency

By now you should have a good idea of both what you bring with you to a practicum, and what you want from your practicum?

Find out as much as you can about each potential agency before you take the next step. What services do they offer? Who do they provide service to? Think about which program area might best meet the practicum requirements and your interests.

Call your field education coordinator to discuss your learning goals and the agencies you hope to apply to. They may have some information about the agencies that they can share.

The field education coordinator will need to know when you are free to begin and what arrangements you are hoping to make.

Depending on the time frame, you and the field education coordinator may choose to make the initial contact with agencies by email, fax or telephone. In any case your contact should reveal that you have a reasonable knowledge of and interest in what the agency does, you are clear about your learning goals and you have skills and knowledge to offer. In both cases your goal is to arrange an exploratory interview.

Following your discussions with your field education coordinator around your learning needs, the next step is to submit your resume to an organization.

## 2.5 Placement Process

We ask that students work closely with the Field Education Coordinators in securing practicum placements to alleviate some of the challenging aspects of practicum-finding, and to allow us to respect the time and resources of community and government staff and agencies. For this reason, we ask that you not contact agencies directly to discuss practicum, without checking in with the appropriate practicum coordinator for your region first. This is especially important for students seeking practicums in Victoria and the Lower Mainland, where higher numbers of students may be contacting a limited number of agencies. Students from programs other than social work will also be contacting your community agencies, so planning well in advance is important.

Students outside the Victoria and Vancouver area may have more flexibility in approaching local agencies, but should still **maintain contact with their field education coordinator**.

Early in your degree you will receive information from the school regarding applying for practicum placements but are encouraged to contact [swfield@uvic.ca](mailto:swfield@uvic.ca) to ask for information at any time.

## 2.6 Thoughts on Finding a Practicum: Student Voices

*Hi! My name is Sylvia and I'm a 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> year distance education student in Nanaimo. I recently started my 3<sup>rd</sup> year practicum and found the process leading up to it rather frustrating at times. In the hopes of easing the process for others I thought I'd share some hindsight-ish kind of thoughts because in retrospect, these are things I'd wished I'd paid more attention to/or had brought to my attention. It's also worth mentioning that many of these suggestions are in fact in the Field Education Manual but I never took the time to read it from cover to cover!*

*So here goes:*

- Don't assume agencies used before are current. Things are continually changing. Some agencies are no longer participating; at others, employees who supervise students are on leave. Other agencies want only students who can do their practicum in 45 days and are not willing to take on students who may need to do it in a different time frame.*
- Don't put all your eggs in one basket. A cliché I know, but true! Initially, I'd pinned my hopes on one organization and spent a month on phone calls and interviews. If I were to do this again, I'd pursue a number of agencies simultaneously that interested me, to provide myself with more choices and allow for a natural thinning-out process.*

- *Be clear as to what you want and what will work for you. Because of the many things going on in my life at present, I knew the 45-day straight practicum wouldn't work—my need was for a practicum over a number of days with shorter hours. Not all agencies are interested in such a set up—and for some it simply doesn't work.*
- *Give yourself lots of leeway time—I had wanted to start in January and didn't realize it might take 2 months to get a practicum in place. Some reasons why—phone calls can take a week to be returned, an agency may want to see you more than one time, and people often need to consult others before decisions can be made. You may be one of the lucky ones who gets a practicum together within a week but don't count on it turning out this way.*
- *Finding a practicum is similar to looking for a job—it takes time and participation. Have a short resume handy, and define your professional abilities and present interests and goals.*

*In closing, I'd like to add—this is your learning experience and you're paying for it. Be creative, be yourself, and remember that the search is part of the process. Your practicum is out there.*

**And from another student:**

*Hi, my name is Ellie and I've completed both my practicums and can offer some general advice.*

- *Create a shortlist of agencies that interest you and then talk to as many people as you can in that agency. Many positions look different from the inside.*
- *Try something that interests you but that you don't expect will be your career area, you never know. Practicums are a great way to try out a new direction.*
- *You will learn lots, no matter what you are doing; sometimes the learning is completely unintended.*
- *Your practicum depends a lot on what you wish to put into it and wish to get out of it. You can influence your position and agency in many ways. They are learning from you as well.*
- *If nothing on the database interests you, create your own practicum placement with guidance from the field education staff. That's what I did for my 4<sup>th</sup> year practicum and the experience of seeking out an agency, selling myself and the practicum concept, then writing the contract was invaluable.*
- *A practicum agency that had been awful for another student may have changed. Key people may have moved on or you may be a better match.*
- *I had two very different practicums, learned tons, have some horror stories but my practicums truly cemented my Social Work learning. Strive to find and articulate the connections between theory and the practicum.*

# SECTION III: GETTING STARTED

### 3.0 The Importance of Having a Plan

Students, supervisors and agencies entering into a field education relationship face many challenges. When a student is interviewed the supervisor and agency make a preliminary decision regarding the appropriateness of the student to work of the agency. Similarly the student can determine if the agency appears to be able to meet their learning goals and they felt comfortable (and hopefully excited!). However, a thorough orientation to the agency can make a difference in how the initial relationship between the two parties develops.

We suggest the following steps to getting started:

- Advance preparation
- Day One essentials
- Week One essentials

### 3.1 Advance Preparation for Meeting Your Supervisor

1. Write down questions for your first meetings with the agency supervisor. Do you have any questions about the agency services as a whole? Have these ready for the supervisor.
2. Think over what you really want to learn. Make a list of your goals, being as specific as possible.
3. Have a copy of your resume to take to the office. Give your agency supervisor permission to share it with office colleagues.
4. Collect course material—course outlines, your favorite handouts—to share with your office colleagues when they ask about the UVic program.
5. Think over and list your ideas for getting introduced to the agency. Some ideas are:
  - read typical files
  - read policy manuals
  - observe others (sit with the receptionist, sit in on intake interview, attend court presentation, go on a home visit with a worker, visit related services such as a foster home or attendance centre.)
  - meet each staff member individually and get to know his or her job.

### 3.2 First Day: Orientation

1. First meeting with agency supervisor:
  - find out what the plans are for your orientation/introduction and beginning work with agency; offer your ideas from your list
  - take your questions with you
  - discuss resume and share learning interests with supervisor
  - establish supervision times
  - establish work hours
  - seek to learn supervisor's and office's most pressing service problems and service priorities
2. List all staff and their jobs.
3. Learn where policy manuals are.
4. Find out what the office mores in dress, breaks for coffee and lunch, making and cleaning up coffee, socializing together are.
5. If necessary, arrange (through supervisor) to take the Public Service Oath, , have a Criminal Record check completed and complete other agency specific requirements.

### 3.3 During the First Week

*Familiarize yourself with agency policies including those regarding health and safety, emergency procedures, harassment and discrimination, etc.*

- Begin a file or notebook of questions, issues, etc. for your supervisor or faculty instructor (liaison).
- Learn office routines for obtaining files, using phone (long distance), advising receptionist of your schedule, use of government cars or mileage, keeping work/caseload statistics, giving work to office staff, getting office supplies such as forms.
- Find out from agency supervisor who is “back-up supervisor” when s/he is absent
- Seek time to talk to each staff member individually.
- Begin a list of resources used most frequently by the office.
- Plan your time using a daily diary. The first priority will be your supervisor’s orientation program, but anticipate “blank spots” by having ideas for your learning.

### 3.4 Ideas to Check with Your Supervisor

- Review policy or other manuals.
- Read up on typical problems presented: the staff of your agency library will have such material, or call your faculty instructor (liaison)
- propose to your supervisor that you visit the local resources (formal and informal), e.g. Police, Friendship Centre or other client centres, Employment Counsellor, Public Health Nurse; develop your own list with staff advice; begin your own resources file.
- Read “sample files” or review legislation related to the job and agency material
- Ask other staff if you can observe their work.
- Attend relevant community meetings or activities—e.g. court hearings, union meetings, town council, school board.

Plan some especially pleasurable and relaxing activity—this is going to feel like a tough week.

### 3.5 During the Second Week

- Is supervision time firmly set?
- Review practicum contract and firm it up.
- Keep your “questions/observations file” to share with supervisor.
- Possibly you have had concrete tasks assigned if not, seek the opportunity. Ask a worker to observe you so you can get early feedback.
- Hopefully work is assigned. Review any files, set up your own system for notes, etc.
- Check what’s happening in town that might interest you.
- Call your faculty instructor (liaison)—s/he is interested to know how you are doing

### 3.6 Developing Your Practicum Contract

The practicum contract is an agreement between the student, the School of Social Work and the practicum agency. It should outline the details of the Field Education Placement for the agency, the agency supervisor, the student and the practicum liaison.

The contract is negotiated between the student and the agency supervisor, with input from the School. It should reflect the learning goals of the student, the opportunities available in the agency, and the requirements of the School. The contract should also reflect both the specific nature of the practicum and

the principles of Anti-Oppressive Practice. The faculty instructor (liaison) will discuss the contract with the student and agency supervisor. When all parties (student, agency supervisor, and faculty instructor (liaison)) have agreed to the contract, it is signed and each party is given a copy.

The contract should include:

- The specific tasks and responsibilities to be undertaken.
- The skills and knowledge that will be emphasized.
- The amount and nature of supervision that will be provided.
- The general administrative details: office space, hours of work, transportation, beginning and end dates for the placement.

The process of developing the practicum contract can be a useful one, as it allows the student and supervisor an opportunity to engage in a discussion of the student's interests and learning goals and the range of opportunities that are available within the practicum agency. Clearly articulating the tasks and responsibilities that the student will be involved in can be helpful in establishing some clarity about the student's role in the agency. Naming the specific skills and knowledge that will be emphasized can help to guide and direct the practicum and to focus the student's learning. This contract is not intended to be rigid—additions and changes can be made later on if new opportunities or interests arise.

The practicum contract also becomes part of the student's evaluation in practicum. The "Tasks and Responsibilities" and "Skills and Knowledge" sections of the contract are written into the evaluation forms and the student is evaluated on each of these items. This provides an opportunity to personalize the generic evaluation forms. For example, a student who is doing a research-based practicum, a student who is doing a policy-oriented practicum and a student who is doing a clinical practicum will engage in a range of different areas of practice. Clear and specific practicum contracts will ensure that their evaluations reflect their learning. Because the contract becomes part of the evaluation process, it is important to make the objectives as specific, measurable and concrete as possible.

### **3.7 Making the Most of Your Placement**

What follows are other specific suggestions on how to get the most value from your placement/practicum.

- Get into a variety of areas of practice. Do not limit yourself. Stretch your boundaries now, to help you to discover the types of work that you enjoy. Through your placement you may learn what you don't want to do as well as what you would like to do more of. Some students who initially want to "do counseling" exclusively, later find themselves in the role of an administrator, supervisor, or consultant.
- Let yourself fit into the agency, instead of trying to make it fit you. Learn as much as you can about the politics of the agency by talking with people who work there, by attending staff meetings, and by asking questions. All of your learning will not result merely from interacting with clients. You can learn a good deal about an agency by being attentive and by talking with co-workers.
- Be aware of the toll that your practicum might have on you, both emotionally and physically. Certain aspects of your life that you have not been willing to look at may be opened up as you get involved. Know that your increased awareness could lead to more anxiety in your life. Make use of your support networks.

- Recognize the limits of your training, practice only within these boundaries, and put yourself in situations where you will be able to obtain supervised experience. Regardless of your educational level, there is always more to learn. It is essential to learn the delicate balance between being overly confident and doubting yourself.
- Strive to be flexible in applying techniques to different work situations, but do so under supervision. Avoid falling into the trap of fitting your clients to one particular theory. Use theory as a means of helping you understand. Realize that diverse backgrounds necessitate diverse communication approaches. Although it is essential to learn therapeutic skills and techniques, they should be applied in appropriate ways.
- If you have a placement that you do not particularly like, don't write it off as a waste of time. At least you are learning that working in a drug-rehabilitation center, for example, is not what you want for a career. Beyond that, it is useful to determine what you don't find productive about the placement and why. You can also think of ways to make your assignment more meaningful, rather than just telling yourself that you'll put in your time and get your credit. There are no doubts at least a few avenues for creating learning opportunities.
- Make connections in the community. Learn how to use community resources and how to draw on support systems beyond your office. You can do this by talking to other professionals in the field, by asking fellow students about their connections in the community, and by developing a network of contacts.
- Keep a journal, recording your observations, experiences, concerns, and personal reactions to your work. Your journal is an excellent way to stay focused on yourself as well as to keep track of what you are doing.
- Be open to trying new things. If you have not worked with a family, for example, observe a family session or, if possible, work with a supervisor who is counseling a family. Avoid setting yourself up by thinking that if you do not succeed perfectly in a new endeavor, you are a dismal failure. Give yourself room to learn by doing, at the same time gaining supervised experience.
- Be prepared to adjust your expectations. Don't expect an agency to give you responsibility for providing service before it has a chance to know you. You'll probably start your fieldwork by being in an observing role. Later you may sit in on a counseling group, for example, and function as a co-leader.
- Find ways to work cooperatively with other students and to combine your talents with theirs. Look for means of tapping into your own creativity. If you are talented musically, for example, look for a way that you might incorporate music into your field placement activities. If a fellow student has talents in the areas of dance and movement, perhaps you can combine forces in an innovative therapeutic intervention.
- Treat your field placement like a job. Approach fieldwork in much the same way as you would if you were employed by the agency. Demonstrate responsibility, be on time for your appointments and meetings, show up for all appointments, and strive to do your best. Although you may be in an unpaid placement, this does not mean you can be irresponsible on the job. Often an unpaid internship can turn into a paid position.
- Think and act in a self-directed way. Don't expect the staff to do everything for you and to take all the initiative. Be active and seek ways that you can involve yourself in a variety of activities. If you

merely wait for a supervisor or other workers to give you meaningful assignments, you may be less than satisfied with your placement

# SECTION IV: FOR THE SUPERVISOR

## 4.1 What is Anti-Oppressive Practice?

Since students will be working to integrate their understanding of Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) with their work in their field placements, we thought it might be helpful to let those of you who supervise and work with our students know a little more about what they are focusing on in the classroom. Anti-Oppressive Practice is social work practice which emphasizes the importance of structural inequalities and issues of marginalization, oppression and privilege. It brings a critical perspective to our social institutions, relationships and interactions, necessitating an analysis of power and an examination of the social locations of both client and worker. Anti-Oppressive Practice emphasizes issues of empowerment and strengths, authenticity and relationship, community and personal transformation. It holds social justice and equality as the goal of social work practice.

In teaching about Anti-Oppressive Practice, we are beginning from an acknowledgement that our society is built around systemic inequality and is structured to benefit a privileged minority at the expense of the majority of the world's population. Within Canada, racism, colonialism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, classism and the domination of culturally Christian western European values and beliefs remain prevalent.

An AOP framework recognizes that knowledge is a cultural production—that social work knowledge is not objective, neutral or value free but that it reflects particular experiences and values and serves an ideological function. In the classroom, we work together to further develop our awareness of the political implications of our everyday social work practices. The curriculum draws on ideas from structural, critical, anti-racist, Indigenous and feminist approaches to practice.

Depending on how we are situated with respect to class, gender, race, sexual orientation, ability and other factors, we all experience power, privilege and access to wealth and resources, and/or oppression, marginalization, exclusion and powerlessness. These different forms of privilege and oppression intersect and interact in complex and often hidden ways. During the course of their studies, students will have an opportunity to develop their understandings of how they have come to know what they hold as knowledge—how their view of the world and of self is related to their personal history and their location within relations of difference. They will be asked to look at current social work theory and practice from a critical standpoint, to examine how social work practices maintain or challenge power structures and social control. Practicum experiences will greatly enrich their learning and allow students to focus on the integration of theory and practice from an Anti-Oppressive perspective.

## 4.2 Suggested Readings

If you are interested in reading more about Anti-Oppressive Practice, the following articles are available for agency supervisors and can be obtained from the Practicum Assistant at (250) 472-5109 or [swfield@uvic.ca](mailto:swfield@uvic.ca). Please let us know if you would like copies of these readings.

References:

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### **4.3 Getting Started with a Student**

The first week of a practicum (or approximately 35 hours) is the orientation phase. During this time the student should be exposed to all facets of the organization.

Supervisors have the responsibility to help acquaint the student with agency policies regarding health and safety, emergency procedures, discrimination and harassment, privacy and confidentiality, and general protocols.

Some of the activities agency supervisors have found to be helpful are the following:

#### **First Day**

This is a good time to have an uninterrupted discussion with your student. We would hope that you could spend two hours with the student in this first meeting.

Probable agenda items for that first day:

- The specifics of the office:
  - a tour and introduction of staff—who is on the team, do they know who the student is?
  - the coffee room and how it operates
  - location of the washrooms
  - safety issues and concerns, evacuation route, first aid
  - office rituals, (e.g. monthly potluck, etc.)
- General overview of the functions in the office: roles; identifying key people in the organization; setting up times for the student to spend with key personnel during the orientation phase.

- Decision making process in the office—how to get what you need.
- Supervision process: what is expected from the student; what the student can expect from the agency supervisor; who will be available for back-up supervision.
- Evaluation form and required competencies: student and supervisor need to take a look at the evaluation form and the starred \* competencies—what work will be given in order to achieve these and how will that flow.
- Student’s learning interests/needs/style:
  - find out how the student feels he/she learns most effectively, i.e. active participation, observing, etc.
  - how does the student’s learning style fit with your supervision style and/or agency requirements? For example, at what point will the student have direct contact with clients? Is there room for negotiation around these issues?
- A general discussion of attitudes, values, and philosophy: yours and the student’s.

## **First Week**

After the introductory session, arrange for the students:

- To spend time in each work area—initially as observer but picking up small tasks that can be done by the end of the week.
- To have appropriate reading material: files, policy manuals, agency forms, books and/or articles pertaining to consumers utilizing service, e.g. readings on addictions.
- To observe sessions with professional staff.
- To attend some work meetings to get a sense of the agency.
- To have work assigned to them.
- To take appropriate oaths and complete a criminal record check if necessary.

Supervisors have also found it helpful to arrange a “buddy” system for the initial phase. In large organizations, a memo to staff outlining the student’s schedule for the first week along with a copy of the student’s resume has served as a good introductory tool.

## **4.4 The Evaluation Process**

The faculty liaison will make the evaluations available to the agency and the student.

There are evaluation forms to be completed on two occasions during the practicum: at the mid-way point and at the end of the practicum. The evaluation provides the major input for the practice portion of the student’s grade for the course. There are descriptors provided to enable you to assess performance for each category

**Some points you may wish to consider prior to completing an evaluation are:**

- Do you have evidence of work done by the student? Have you observed an interview, listened to a tape, read a file or report the student has written?

- Evaluate the individual as a student, not as an employee. However, in the 4<sup>th</sup> year practicum at the time of the final evaluation, students should have reached a beginning employee level of competence.
- Think of the student on the interim progress report as having completed the beginning or orientation phase of her/his work.

At the mid-way point feedback is seen as a guide to how the student is doing and whether or not the student and agency are on target. It is useful as a progress report. At this point you might find you need to modify the practicum contract.

In completing the evaluation form or interim progress report, supervisors may choose to do a draft copy and discuss it with the student. Alternatively, they might ask the student to complete a self-evaluation while they complete a copy. Then the student and agency supervisor get together and discuss differences and similarities. In any case, the faculty instructor (liaison) will want to talk with both student and supervisor together to discuss the student's progress.

The faculty instructor (liaison) assigns the final grade. The practicum is evaluated on a pass/fail basis. Faculty instructor (liaison) will require evidence of performance to ensure that grades for field work practice are consistent with the performance standards of the School of Social Work.

In order that all parties are fully prepared to engage in the evaluation process, the following guidelines are offered as "helpful hints".

At the midterm review, it is the student's responsibility to make available to the agency supervisor samples of work for discussion. The midterm review is a critical point for the student to review clear, specific, and informed feedback about performance that is tied to examples. Evaluation needs to be thorough, fair and objective in order that the student can re-engage in effective learning for the remainder of the practicum.

- Allow a period of reflection as the first step in preparing for evaluation. Recall the events and feelings.
- Review the practicum contract and evaluation forms.
- Review the nature of the work assignments, assess the range, complexity of work asked for and received.
- Obtain feedback from others who have been involved with the student, i.e. co-workers, board members, etc.
- Set aside sufficient time to really engage in the work (1-2 hours is frequently needed).
- Strive for mutuality and openness. The student is encouraged to be actively involved in self-evaluation.

The Agency Supervisor can offer explicit feedback by:

- emphasizing the details of the student's practice and learning
- identifying themes
- identifying areas of mastery/problem/areas for further growth
- encouraging self-appraisal

The Student can offer explicit feedback by:

- questioning or raising issues about the supervisor's perception and assessment
- commenting on the context of learning, i.e. organizational characteristics, nature of work, etc. in relation to facilitating or constraining the student's learning.

An evaluation meeting will be held between the student, supervisor and faculty liaison, either in person or by teleconference. The student and supervisor should have completed the evaluation forms together prior to this meeting. This is the time for an overview of the student's learning with a focus on identified areas for further learning and involvement. Students are asked to have some samples of their work available for review, if requested, the purpose being to further assist the university in understanding the nature and complexity of the work and the student role in the agency.

Following completion of the midterm review, please provide a copy of the signed evaluation to the faculty instructor (liaison). If there have been any areas of disagreement these should be noted on the evaluation form.

If any one of the parties, either student, agency supervisor or faculty instructor (liaison), identifies any significant concerns or problem areas, then further and immediate three-way consultation will take place to assess the issues involved and to identify a work plan with a clearly defined time frame.

As the final evaluation approaches, both the agency supervisor and the student need to again review the practicum contract. Again, it is the student's responsibility to be accountable for his/her work and to make available to the agency supervisor samples of work.

During the final evaluation session, the student and agency supervisor are encouraged to be clear, specific and concrete about the student's performance. It is by this kind of feedback that a student learner can fully understand the range and depth of what she/he has learned and also what new learning needs and goals have emerged. Students are encouraged to identify areas for further learning and professional development.

## **4.5 Performance Concerns**

It is important to recognize and respond immediately to any learning or performance difficulties a student may be having. All students should have ongoing supervisory review and consultation. This provides an opportunity for student and supervisor to name any concerns and to focus learning and supervision on any challenging areas of practice.

Early recognition and feedback of serious performance problems is especially important. Field supervisors should communicate their observations and concerns to the student as soon as they become aware of potential difficulties or areas of struggle. It is also important to involve the faculty liaison early on, to assist in developing a plan to address the concerns. Students as well as clients are better served by early recognition of significant performance problems.

The practicum is distinct from most other university courses in that field placement in the community entails not only educational objectives for the student and faculty, but also professional responsibilities to clients, social agencies, and the community. When students engage clients and assume service responsibilities, there are ongoing professional, educational and ethical responsibilities to be considered. If a student's field performance and professional behaviour are unsatisfactory to the extent that client obligations are not being met appropriately, faculty and community supervisors have the responsibility to intervene. When students perform poorly in placement, the treatment and service needs of clients become the higher priority. In these situations, agency supervisors and faculty should act to protect the needs of the client and ensure appropriate service provision.

## 4.6 Guidelines for Consultant Social Workers

### Purpose

The role of the consultant social worker is introduced to provide additional social work support to students and agencies in those placements where supervisors do not have a social work degree. This is in no way meant to question the competence of the agency supervisor. Each profession, however, comes with its own world view and it is critical that students in a School of Social Work have access to consultation from a BSW or MSW. This is also the view of the Accreditation Board of CASSW (the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work).

### Role

The consultant social worker may engage in one or more of the following roles within the practicum. All of these roles will not be appropriate in all settings.

- Teacher: assisting the social work student in making connections between social work theory/concepts/principles.
- Providing educational opportunities for agency staff.
- Support Person: providing support to new supervisors.
- Resource Person: providing information on community resources, written materials, etc.
- Feedback Person: providing ongoing feedback to student based on observations within the consultant/student relationship.
- Evaluator: participating in student evaluations either through written submissions or active involvement in evaluation meetings.
- Supervisor: providing temporary supervision to the student in the case of supervisor's absence.
- Interviewer: involved in placement interview to assist in determination of student suitability for agency.

It is recommended that the specifics of the role of the consultant social worker be negotiated by all parties within the first two weeks of practicum. A face to face meeting of the supervisor, student and consultant social worker is strongly recommended at this time.

Once the consultant's role and the nature of the contact have been negotiated this should be included in the student's practicum contract. This can be renegotiated at any time.

### 4.6.1 Contact

The frequency of contact between the consultant social worker and student will vary depending on the availability of the consultant and the needs of the student. In the past this has ranged from weekly face to face contact to monthly meetings with interim telephone contact. Consultant social workers who are involved with several practicum students may choose to hold group sessions.

The nature of the contact between the consultant social worker and supervisor should be negotiated at the outset of the practicum. Once again this will depend on the needs/wishes of the parties involved.

## **4.6.2 Contact with School for Consultants**

It is the responsibility of the School of Social Work to support the consultant social worker in his/her role.

## **4.7 Library Services for Supervisors**

As partners in the education of the next generation of Social Workers, agency supervisors are encouraged to use the University of Victoria Library services. For supervisors who are located outside of the Victoria area, that means using the UVic InfoLine. This is a service that enables you to borrow books and articles from the library, and have information and materials delivered to you by mail, courier or fax. In order to access InfoLine services, you must have a library card. To obtain a library card or to get more information about InfoLine, contact our Practicum Assistant at (250) 472-5109 or by email at [swfield@uvic.ca](mailto:swfield@uvic.ca).

# SECTION V: POLICIES

## 5.1 The Faculty of Human and Social Development Policies and Procedures

The School of Social Work is part of the Faculty of Human and Social Development and must abide by the Faculty's policies and Procedures located here: <http://www.uvic.ca/hsd/faculty-staff/policies/index.php>

The student is encouraged to review all the policies but, in regards to practicum, please note the following from the Faculty of Human and Social Development:

### Guidelines for Professional Conduct

The Faculty of Human and Social Development expects students to develop and adhere to a professional code of conduct. The faculty supports models for professional conduct based on the following guidelines:

- submission of oneself to a professional code of ethics
- exercise of personal discipline, accountability and judgement
- acceptance of personal responsibility for continued competency and learning
- willingness to serve the public, client or patient and place them before oneself
- ability to recognize the dignity and worth of all persons in any level of society
- willingness to assist others in learning
- ability to recognize one's own limitations
- maintenance of confidentiality of information (including all electronic communication) appropriate to the purposes and trust given when that information was acquired
- acceptance that one's professional abilities, personal integrity and the attitudes one demonstrates in relationships with other persons are the measure of professional conduct

### Unprofessional Conduct

Students in the Faculty of Human and Social Development are subject to the provisions of the code of ethics of their respective professions, and may be required to withdraw from their School for violating these provisions. Students may also be required to withdraw from their School when ethical, medical or other reasons interfere with satisfactory practice in their respective disciplines.

### General Practicum Policies

The faculty reserves the right to approve any agency or institution that provides placements for student practicum, and to change any placement assigned to a student. The student, however, has the right to be informed in writing of the reasons for any change in placement. The faculty accepts responsibility to provide sufficient practicum placements within a student's program. Availability of practicums requires a signed Practicum Placement Agreement. Access to practicums is competitive and may be limited based on availability, geographic location and specialization. A student may be required to withdraw from a practicum course if none of the available practicum agencies will accept the student.

It is the responsibility of the course instructor to inform students of the criteria by which unprofessional conduct will be judged in the practicum setting.

## 5.2 Practicum Policy Manual

(Updated regularly at this link on the School of Social Work website)

<http://www.uvic.ca/hsd/socialwork/home/home/policies/practice/index.php>

## 5.3 Changing Agencies

After practicum commences, changes are only made when the placement is clearly not meeting the student's learning needs. This could occur when there is:

- a previously unidentified learning need which cannot be met in the agency inadequate supervision
- inadequate or inappropriate workload
- personal difficulty of either the student or supervisor which precludes a satisfactory learning experience
- any form of workplace harassment or discrimination

If a change in practicum is required, the first placement must be properly and respectfully terminated before any negotiations begin for a second placement. Any change in placement may also require that the student complete extra hours in order to allow sufficient time to demonstrate competence in the new setting and be evaluated on the current learning.

## 5.4 Health, Safety and Human Rights

Students have a right to a safe working environment, free of discrimination and harassment. The University policy regarding discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment of its students and employees, applies to students in the practicum setting. The School of Social Work supports this policy and encourages any student who feels that they have been the subject of discrimination or harassment, to discuss the situation with the University's Office for the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment, (250-721-7007). Any concerns may also be discussed with your faculty liaison.

Students and supervisors should also be aware that The University policy on religious observance applies to students in practicum.

## 5.5 Inability to Secure a Placement

When seeking a practicum position, students may apply to a maximum of four agencies in any one semester. If the student is unable to secure a placement they will be allowed to withdraw without penalty from the course and advised on how to pursue a placement in the next semester.

## 5.6 Paid Practicum

In general, a social work practicum is an unpaid educational experience. The issue of paid practicum has been raised numerous times and discussed within the school. This issue has also been under study by the CASWE (Canadian Association of Social Work Educators). This issue needs to be looked at closely, as it raises a number of complex questions and considerations. These include:

- **Learning needs of students.** A practicum is an educational opportunity in which the student is offered tasks to meet specific learning objectives. The student participates in establishing these learning goals and may request assignments which will enhance learning. The student should be able to indicate that they do not want to do certain tasks that they already have a level of skill and experience in, or that do not fit with their learning goals. On the other hand, an employee is hired to perform tasks based on the needs of the employer. In an employment relationship (including most co-op placements), the employee's learning needs are second to the agency's needs.

- **Evaluation.** When someone is hired to do a job, they are expected to bring a level of competence. In practicum, the purpose is to gain experience and competence. Expectations of students and of employees are different, and a student must be evaluated as a learner.
- **Race, class and gender issues.** The school recognizes that for many students, there are serious financial barriers to spending an extended period of time in an unpaid practicum. The possibility of receiving payment for time spent in practicum might make social work education more accessible for students marginalized with respect to class, race, socio-economic background and lack of access to financial resources. We are also aware that it is primarily fields of study that are dominated by women that require unpaid practicum work (social work, nursing, child and youth care etc.) while other fields (law, public administration, computers) offer paid practicum work or co-op placements).

The School will consider students' proposals for paid practicum on an individual basis. A proposal for paid practicum must address the following points:

- The practicum experience must be different than the student's regular workplace and previous volunteer or work experience. Fourth year practicum must be different than the third year practicum.
- If the practicum is in the student's current field or current place of employment, the practicum position needs to clearly be focused on new learning. The student must be able to leave the "worker" role and step into a new role as a learner. This difference in roles should be reflected in:
  - a change in agency or, in a large agency, a change in program or physical setting.
  - a change in supervisor.
  - a change of responsibilities.
  - an increased complexity of tasks.
- The student needs to demonstrate a plan, developed in collaboration with the agency supervisor, that addresses:
  - how the student and supervisor will ensure that the student's learning needs will remain a priority throughout the course of the practicum;
  - how any difficulties-- such as performance problems-- will be addressed; and
  - how the student will be evaluated—e.g. Are the expectations of the student different than they would be of an employee? Are there any contradictions or dilemmas that arise and how will these be handled?

The agency must indicate their written agreement and assurance that the student's educational needs will be met. To this end, there needs to be a separate supervisor for the educational contract, separate from the usual work supervisor. This separation protects the student, allows them to take risks, and to respectfully be critical of the workplace without putting their employment or their practicum in jeopardy.

Proposals need to be submitted, in advance, to the Field Education Coordinator. These will be brought to the Practicum Team for consideration. You **must** receive approval from the School before accepting a paid practicum position.

## **5.7 Requests for Exceptions to Practicum Policy**

Any requests for special exceptions to practicum policy should be brought by the student to the Field Education Coordinator. The Field Education Coordinator will seek advice and guidance from the Practicum Team and senior administration. Exceptions may be granted in circumstances of specific educational need or extreme personal circumstances.

## **5.8 Sick Time**

Students are responsible for completing the required number of hours in their practicum. Two sick days per practicum are allowed without a make-up requirement. If more than two days are missed due to illness, this time needs to be made up. This should be negotiated between the student and the agency supervisor. The student should also notify the faculty instructor of the arrangements made.

## **5.9 Strikes, Job Action and Population Health Directives**

When the practicum setting experiences labour disruption in the form of job action and strikes, students are expected to honour and respect any picket lines in their setting. Where this brings undue hardship, students should discuss a plan of action with their faculty liaison. Should a student be in a placement that is closed due to health concerns, they should immediately inform their faculty instructor (liaison). Students are not considered part of essential workplace services during a health crisis.

Credit will not be given for any time lost while agencies are out on strike or closed.

## **5.10 University Contracts and Liability Insurance**

The University of Victoria requires a Practicum Agreement with agencies which provide practicum opportunities for students. The major reason for such an agreement is to clarify that the University will maintain comprehensive liability insurance, saving harmless the agency against all liability which may result from any negligent acts of the instructors, students and staff of the University. The contract between the University and agency is not student specific but outlines the legal responsibilities of the university and the agency. This contract is negotiated by the General Counsel's Office at UVic, not by the School of Social Work. . Each new affiliation agreement is designed specifically for the host agency and will be sent directly to the agency for review prior to signing.

## **5.11 Denial of Practicum, Withdrawal and Directed Placements**

According to the policies of the Faculty of Human and Social Development, a student's application for a placement may be denied if the field coordinator in consultation with the faculty and director of the school deem that a student's preparatory work is insufficient and/or incomplete to reasonably assure they will be successful in their placement. Students will be given the opportunity to work with the school to produce a plan to address gaps in learning which should lead to a greater likelihood of success in their upcoming placement. The student may appeal the denial of practicum.

Students may be required to withdraw from the practicum with a failing grade if their performance in the practicum or their practicum preparation is considered unsatisfactory by their supervisor and faculty instructor (liaison).

If recommendations regarding specific learning needs are encountered in any prerequisite courses the school reserves the right to place the student in a practicum where these concerns would be addressed and monitored. When there is a clear indication of a particular learning need, the student will be guided by the faculty instructor (liaison) and field education coordinator in the choice of a practicum where this learning need could best be met. This is referred to as a directed placement.

Directed placements are also used in the case of missed opportunity. Students and faculty in consultation may wish to ensure that a particular skill or area is available to the student in the practicum and therefore, seek a directed placement.

If a student receives a failing grade for the practicum or if a practicum change is required as described in the above, the following policy will apply in seeking a repeat or directed practicum. A directed practicum is one where the student's choice of placement must be made in consultation with the faculty. A directed placement may be recommended because of a learning need which could not be met in a previous placement or course.

The present course instructor or practicum faculty liaison defines with the student (and the present agency where applicable) a statement of the student's:

- strengths, knowledge, and skills
- identified learning needs or areas of concern requiring particular attention during the practicum
- learning goals
- specific requirements

This statement, signed by both student and faculty instructor, is placed on the student's file and shared with prospective agencies. Where the student has a different perspective of his/her learning goals, needs or concerns, the student will be encouraged to write a statement to this effect which will also be shared with prospective agencies.

The choice of possible agencies and supervisor for a repeat or directed practicum will be based on the student's learning needs. The choice and rationale is discussed with the student by the faculty instructor. The student makes a choice from the identified agencies. A potential agency receives the written statement of learning needs along with any regular documentation for the practicum. The agency then decides whether or not to accept the student for an interview and, if appropriate, subsequent placement.

Up to a maximum of six agencies will be asked to review the application and consider the identified student for placement. If all six agencies do not accept the student the faculty will be asked to assess the situation and make a decision regarding withdrawal.

Following placement, a special contract focused on student learning needs and with special monitoring of progress is arranged between agency, faculty instructor and student.

During the time period of the placement, the student should be free of any encumbrances and duties from their regular workplace. The student should not continue to be responsible for cases or expected to be “called out” while at their field placement.

In general, practicum placements are open to all eligible students. That is, a practicum will not be developed for a particular student to the exclusion of other students. However, a spirit of equity will prevail. There are occasions when a student or group of students may be perceived as at a disadvantage and special arrangements may be necessary. The faculty has the sole authority to make final decisions regarding the suitability of practicum proposals.

## **5.12 Electronic Communication Policy (including Social Media)**

Students must follow the [School of Social Work Electronic Communications Policy](#). The policy includes guidelines for the use of electronic communications including social media as it relates to your practicum. Please make sure you have reviewed and understand it.