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SENIOR PRACTICUM (SOC 490) INSTRUCTIONS



Department of Sociology

Boise State University

Revised August 2002

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this manual is to assist you in preparing for experimental learning in a private or public organization. You will find the necessary forms, guidelines and registration information. This manual will also be used by practicum site supervisors to design an experimental program for students. ***Please read the manual with care.***

The Department of Sociology has an assigned Practicum Professor, but the student is responsible for much of the initial process to be assigned a Practicum position. The student is expected to be thoroughly aware of the contents that follow. ***Failure of the student to meet this expectation will delay the process of site placement.***

SENIOR PRACTICUM GUIDELINES

Senior Practicum experience is required of all Sociology majors to provide students with an experimental opportunity whereby they may develop practical skills linked to their academic program of study. A Practicum is generally an unpaid “field experience” in an occupational setting on a part-time basis for a prescribed period of time. The Practicum offers intellectual growth, an opportunity to blend theory and practice, and career development opportunities.

This experience can be one of the most valuable activities of your undergraduate career. The Practicum Professor will work with students and placement site coordinators to ensure that the time and activities are rewarding to both parties. The contacts made, letters of recommendation by placement site coordinators and cumulative experience gained can prove invaluable to your success upon graduation.

One member of the department faculty has assigned responsibility to coordinate and evaluate the Practicum and is responsible for submission of the final grades based, in part, on an evaluation by a Practicum Operational Supervisor.

Eligibility:

- ↻ Senior status in Sociology major program
- ↻ Student schedule to graduate in May or December of the current year
- ↻ Cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or higher
- ↻ Ability to agree to complete 150 hours during the semester

Students are required to complete a Practicum Application form included in this manual. The completion of the Practicum Application will require that the student confer with the Practicum Professor to ensure that the site selection is in keeping with the academic standards of the program and will provide an experience consistent with the academic and career goals of the student. In most cases, the Practicum Professor will have a series of possible Practicum sites and the student may select an existing site, or if none are available to meet the student’s goals, the Professor will work with the student to locate an acceptable site.

Students must prepare a resumè, describing experience, education and other essential information that would be important to evaluate the potential “fit” with an agency where the student might be placed for a Practicum. A resume format is included.

The following describes the philosophy of Practicum, the responsibilities of the department, students who enroll, and the site selected for the Practicum. You will want to review the contents with care and to be fully aware of your obligations as a student.

Philosophy of Practicum:

The Practicum was added to the Sociology major curriculum at Boise State University in an effort to link programs of study with experimental learning, as a result of a student's work in a community agency, public or private. The underlying premise: one can learn by doing than by being told. Thus, we strive to ensure that your experience in the field is sound, aligned with your career goals and a rewarding activity.

Practicum experiences are an important part of undergraduate programs throughout the country. At Boise State University, the Department of Sociology, requires the Practicum for several reasons. The Practicum provides you with on-the-job training and exposure to a career setting, which helps you verify your choice of academic major. A Practicum is a logical extension of the classroom, which enables you to see first hand how your academic training can be applied in an occupational setting. Finally, the Practicum helps you bridge the gap between campus and career, making the transition easier and more successful.

Responsibility:

Practicum Host:

1. To develop a learning experience description (similar to a job description) for student interns and collaborate with the student to complete the Learning Agreement Form.
2. To ensure that the students are assigned work that is beneficial in gaining experience linked to their academic program.
3. To match students with the placement requirements.
4. To provide supervision to insure that the student acquires and practices proper procedures. *The level of supervision should be the same as with a new employee.*
5. To expect quality performance from students in much the same way it would be expected of a new employee.
6. At the close of the Practicum assignment, the person assigned as the Operational Supervisor for the student will be responsible to evaluate the student performance. The evaluation will require (a) completion of the evaluation form, provided by the Department of Sociology and (b) a letter regarding the qualities related to the student's performance.

Suggested evaluation criteria:

Excellent – Judgment, knowledge, attitudes and activities of extremely high quality. Carries out assigned tasks with a minimum of supervision. A rating given only to those whose performance is exceptional.

Above average - Judgment, knowledge, attitudes and activities are better than average but the student could have done better, or one of the factors is only average or less.

Average - The performance was satisfactory but without special merit. Significant amount of supervision required.

Marginal - The performance was barely satisfactory, required more instruction and/or supervision that is normal or desirable.

Unsatisfactory - The performance was not acceptable.

These documents will be placed in the student's advising files and may be useful to them at a later time as they begin their careers. The importance of this evaluation cannot be overstated and site supervisors are encouraged to evaluate students as accurately as possible. Evaluations can be forwarded to the Practicum Professor at:

Department of Sociology
Boise State University
1910 University Drive
MS 1945
Boise, Idaho 83725-1945
Telephone: (208) 426-3406

Student Responsibilities:

1. To accord absolute dedication and effort to your work and to the Practicum host. Your Practicum obligations are the same as those of a permanent employee. This means acceptance of supervision and full compliance with all relevant regulations and policies.
2. Use maximum good judgment and proper practices in accordance with the law and applicable procedures. As a minimum standard of preparation, become familiar with those local and state laws that apply.
3. Maintain confidentiality of all activities as required and do not discuss with any unauthorized person during or after your Practicum.
4. Maximize the opportunity to demonstrate your professionalism. If you do well, you will receive a positive recommendation. On the other hand, poor performance or attitude will likely result in a poor reference and could hamper employment opportunities in the future.
5. When you encounter a situation where you need help and advice, do not hesitate to seek it from your supervisor. Do not worsen a situation by proceeding further in ignorance.
6. Accept advice and constructive suggested changes for what they are – another individual's attempt to help you gain more from your experience.
7. Complete requisite hours on site, ca. 150 and meet with the Practicum Coordinator on a scheduled basis and submit written assignments as assigned.

Failure to complete these requirements will result in a lower grade.

The Department of Sociology Responsibility:

1. The Department is responsible for identification and publication of information about Practicum sites, to ensure that the description meet the academic standards of the program and to work with

the agency to place the most competent student in a position that maximizes the experimental learning potential.

2. The Department is responsible for meeting with students on a scheduled basis, discuss relationship of experience and academic major, to assist in resolution of any problems encountered either by the student or Practicum site.
3. The Department is responsible for the final grade reporting to the Registrar's Office and that the grade submitted be based on the evaluation received from the Practicum site plus written work required of the student by Practicum (see student responsibilities above).

To register for SOC 490 Senior Practicum
3 credits
You need permission to enroll in SOC 490!

1. Discuss your career interests with ***your*** Academic Advisor
2. Carefully review the *Senior Practicum Manual* requirements
3. Complete the “Application for Senior Practicum in Sociology” form and the “Placement Site Checklist”
4. Complete your resume (guidelines and example are found in the manual)
5. Obtain a current “Advisors” copy of your transcript from the BSU Registrar.
6. Submit the entire package (forms, transcripts, and resume) to Practicum Professor on or before **November 15th**.
7. Schedule an appointment with the Practicum Professor.

ALL APPLICATION DOCUMENTS MUST BE TYPED, BE NEAT AND ACCURATE

Potential Practicum Sites:

The range of Practicum settings mirrors the varied occupational goals of Sociology undergraduates. There are Practicum opportunities in many occupational settings, both public and private organizations. A Practicum could involve fund raising, research for a political campaign, mediation, and diversion Activities with juvenile offenders, to mention a few.

Some settings include:

ACLU OF IDAHO
YOUTH COUNSELORS
WCA OR YMCA
RESEARCH ASSISTANT/TRAINEE
JUVENILE DIVERSION
ADA COUNTY DETENTION CENTER
MEDIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS
IDAHO MIGRANT COUNCIL, INC.
LOCAL BUSINESSES
POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS, FEDERAL, STATE, OR LOCAL
IDAHO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
KIDS COUNT
TEACHING ASSISTANT
OTHERS THAT MAY BE DEVELOPED IN THE FUTURE

Your Resume

To gain the maximum advantage from an experimental learning activity, it is important to determine what you want to do when you graduate. To develop a sound plan for the future requires that you approach selecting your Practicum in an organized, informed and focused manner. This also requires that you know yourself, know what you want and what you have to offer.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Clarify what you define to be a “good” experience. Verbalize your criteria for the “good” experience and be aware that you need to be willing to make some compromises. Think of the future relationship between your Practicum experience and career choice, identify some preferences and requirements.

Some questions to consider:

- * What appeals to you about the prospective Practicum site?
- * Do you like to work alone or in groups? Consider your own reactions to working with people and what you want to avoid in working relationships.
- * What are your long-term goals? What expectations do you have regarding the type of employment you will have five or ten years from now?

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO OFFER

All too often we think in terms of one or two qualifications/skills we have. Do not limit yourself to thinking in terms of your academic major. You may have special skills or knowledge acquired from electives that are important to a Practicum placement.

Take an inventory of your skills and experience gained from both work and “non-work” you have done in the past. Analyze your experiences. What are the components that will translate to strengths for the Practicum. For example, organizing events, developing programs, implementing activities, research and the like. Focus on the qualities that support the type of experience you want.

Some questions to consider:

- What would my references think are my assets and liabilities?
- What knowledge or skills have you gained from hobbies and extra-curricular activities?
- What honors, awards have you received and how did you learn from them?
- In which classes did you do best in school? Which classes did you do poorly?
- Are you a detail person? A morning or afternoon person? Do you respond well to pressure?

Complete the Placement Site Selection Checklist. Spend enough time on the analysis of your qualifications and determine the ones you want to utilize most in your future career.

THE RESUME

Once you have completed your self-inventory, placement site selection checklist, you need to prepare a resume. The resume is a brief summary of those qualifications you have identified, presented in a manner to best support your application for a Practicum site.

Write your own resume. You should come across as a unique person with qualities of interest to the reader. Resumes should be brief. It is rarely wise to exceed two pages even if you have a lot of experience. The document should be pleasing to the eye, void of spelling errors. Remember this is the first impression you will be making, make it a professional impression.

SUGGESTED RESUME FORMAT:

1. **Personal Information:** Name, address, and phone number
2. **Education:** Date degree is expected, major, short courses or workshops completed, specialized course (statistics, research methods or dispute resolution), GPA.
3. **Employment History:** Paid employment, begin with most recent and work backward. Annotate the importance of each job and duties.
4. **Volunteer Experience:** Your responsibilities as a volunteer, things you learned.
5. **Academic Honors:** Special awards in high school and college (scholarships, leadership awards).
6. **Career Interests:** Statement of your goals after you complete your college education.
7. **References:** Name, addresses and phone numbers of three (3) people who will serve as references and attest to your suitability for the type of career you indicated above. At least one should be a major professor who is familiar with your academic work.

PRACTICUM FORMS

*Boise State University
Department of Sociology*

Placement Site Selection Checklist

The following items are designed to help students select placement sites that meet educational and career goals. If the space provided is not enough, add additional page(s) and itemize which item you are continuing.

Previous Internship or Practicum Experience:

Academic Classes or Skills Training: (List any course work or skills training that would be relevant to a placement such as research methods, statistics, mediation and/or conflict resolution).

Time: (Consider your class schedule and other commitments in your life, how much time can you realistically allot to a placement each week? Specify days, hours, you will and will **not** be available).

Site Preferences: (What experiences will be most useful for your future job or academic plans?)

Learning Opportunities: (What learning opportunities do you hope to have and what level of involvement and responsibility would you like?)

Personal Concerns: (List any concerns you have about the limits of your abilities or knowledge).

Other Comments: (List any issues or concerns not addressed above).

**Boise State University
Department of Sociology**

Learning Agreement Form for Practicum

Student Name: _____ Student #: _____

Placement Site: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Extension: _____

Site Supervisor Name: _____

Phone: _____ Extension: _____

Placement Site Description: _____

Student Placement Schedule: (Record of Days and Hours on Site):

Mon _____ Tues _____ Wed _____ Thurs _____ Fri _____ Sat _____ Sun _____

Goals and Learning Activities

<i>Learning Goals</i>	<i>Learning Activities</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Site Supervisor Signature: _____

Date: _____

Supervising Professor Signature: _____

Date: _____

