

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

GRADUATE COLLEGE of SOCIAL WORK

Our mission: University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work (GCSW) prepares diverse leaders in practice and research to address complex challenges and achieve sustainable social, racial, economic, and political justice, locally and globally, through exceptional education, innovative research, and meaningful community engagement.

PRACTICUM AT PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT GUIDELINES

All practicum at place of employment policies and processes are in accordance with the Council on Social Work Education's 2022 Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards.

Employee work tasks can count towards practicum requirements when completed under the supervision of a qualified practicum instructor and are directly linked to the nine social work competency learning areas (CSWE, EPAS, 2022, 3.3.7).

- Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
- Competency 2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice
- Competency 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice
- Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-informed practice.
- Competency 5: Engage in Policy practice.
- Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities
- Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities
- Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities
- Competency 9: Evaluate practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities

Practicum experiences are designed to assess social work practice skills in a real-world setting. For practicum at place of employment, emphasis is placed on integrating social work classroom learning, thinking, and knowledge into employment/work tasks and activities to allow for assessment of social work practice skills.

The employer must be willing to partner with the student, practicum instructor, and practicum liaison in creating, supporting, and maintaining situations focused on growth and learning. Activities need to extend the students learning and align with the student's practicum purpose:

- **Generalist** placements serve individuals, families, groups, organizations or communities. They engage in any activities macro, mezzo or micro that introduce roles social workers have, clients whom social workers serve and systems in which social workers operate.
- **Concentration** students are seeking a practicum that is more advanced and narrower in focus providing opportunities to integrate knowledge from coursework and apply skills.
 - **Concentration Macro** placements serve groups, organizations, and communities. (For example, research, policy, funding/donations, organizational structure/training/assessment and enhancement, program planning and evaluation etc.)
 - **Concentration Clinical** placements serve individuals, families, and groups. (For example, crisis intervention, assessment, case management, counseling intervention, wellbeing services etc.)

Practicum at Place of Employment Options

Same Work: Students keep their current role at their job and count work hours and activities that connect to the 9 competencies towards 100% of practicum requirements.

Combo Work: Students count some of their current work tasks and hours towards practicum requirements and find or create additional roles, hours, activities or tasks, outside of current job duties, to extend learning or meet practicum requirements.

Different Work: The student engages in a separate and additional role from their current employment role to meet all practicum requirements.

Note: All students wanting to pursue practicum at their place of employment must discuss their plans with their employer. Students interested in doing "combo work" or "different work" will need to discuss with their employer whether these tasks can be completed within their normal working hours or if these tasks will require additional hours to their current schedule.

If anything changes with a student's employment before completion of requirements or receiving a practicum grade, the practicum faculty liaison should be immediately notified by the student and/or practicum instructor. A change in employment will lead to placement being paused or stopped and a review will take place to determine next steps. A change in employment could delay their ability to meet course requirements and/or change their degree timeline.

Employment based performance evaluations should be treated separately from practicum related responsibilities and should have no impact on the student's role as a practicum student. All employment policies should be followed. All general practicum policies apply to practicum at place of employment. Any practicum requirements or policy which conflicts with employment policies should be discussed with the practicum instructor and practicum faculty. Employment issues should be maintained and addressed with the employer, as the Practicum Team and University have limited to no authority over the employment agency.

The following employment settings will not be approved: agencies owned and operate by student's relatives, either by birth or marriage; temporary agencies; students privately-owned businesses and/or consulting practices; agencies that are under investigation or have been sanctioned for fraudulent or unethical activities by their accrediting bodies.

Weekly Hour Cap: Regardless of the placement and the work situation, students cannot count more than 40 hours per week towards practicum requirements. A student may work more than 40 hours a week but only 40 will count. Practicum is a learning opportunity and not merely accruing hours. Students should be engaged in activities that encompass all 9 learning competency areas.

Before students can start counting employment time towards practicum hours, they must receive approval and finalization through the practicum office and be engaged in weekly practicum instruction, with an approved practicum instructor. No activities or hours completed prior to instruction and approval can be counted. **Practicum instructors provide time and supervision distinct from employment supervision that extend and enhance activities, connecting them to learning competencies and associated behaviors specific to the practicum purpose.**

PRACTICUM INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS & ROLE

Practicum instructors offer weekly support to the student to facilitate distinct (different/additional from employment management or supervision) integration of learning and application of social work knowledge, skills, and values. Practicum instructors can support in two formats:

- **Internal to the agency:** The practicum instructor is someone who works for or is affiliated with the employment agency, and may be the direct employment supervisor, meets qualifications and provides weekly practicum instruction- either during the workday or after hours. Weekly practicum instruction must be distinct from employment supervision and management.
- **External to the agency:** A person not employed and/or affiliated with the employing agency who meets qualifications and provides practicum instruction. The employment agency must agree to having an external instructor supervising the student.

A practicum instructor must meet qualifications (see below), be approved, and provided training by the GCSW practicum office to fill this role. Students nor the GCSW pay practicum instructors. A practicum instructor should not be in role that is managed or administrated by the student or subordinate to the student. A practicum instructor should not be directly related to the student, either by birth or marriage.

Practicum Instructor Qualifications:

- A master's degree in social work (MSW) from a CSWE accredited program (license not required)
- At least 2 years, post-MSW, full-time social work experience
- Capacity to offer weekly, one hour, supervision to the student throughout practicum
- Willingness to become affiliated and complete online, asynchronous training for GCSW
- Approval from the agency/employer to provide or support adequate student orientation, training, oversight, feedback and integration of coursework knowledge to experiences.

If you have any questions, please contact the UH GCSW Practicum Team at: practeam@uh.edu

Thank you for your interest in becoming a valued partner and supporter of practicum education at the GCSW!