



**PSYCHOLOGY
UNDERGRADUATE
PRACTICUM
MANUAL**

**Alvernia University
Department of Psychology
and Counseling**

This Practicum Manual is provided to all undergraduate psychology students involved in a field practicum and to field supervisors in agencies where students are placed. The purpose of this manual is to provide an understanding of the objectives of field placement, the student's responsibilities, the field supervisor, the agency, and the university, and the procedures for evaluating the student's performance.

The Psychology and Counseling Department of Alvernia University commends those professionals who accept the responsibility of supervising students. We acknowledge the time and effort spent providing students the opportunity to learn and practice professional skills. Therefore, this manual is dedicated to those professionals who share their knowledge, values, and skills with Alvernia University students.

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STUDENT WEEKLY JOURNAL

**OBJECTIVES OF FIELD
PLACEMENT
&
CRITERIA FOR AGENCY
SELECTION**

I. OBJECTIVES OF PLACEMENT

The field placement experience is designed to:

- A. Allow the student to deepen their understanding of the knowledge, values, and skills of the profession they serve, with particular attention to integrating and applying knowledge, values, and skills.
- B. Enhance and refine the techniques and skills of the student. In preparation for an entry-level position, the student should have some experience with the following: observation and data collection; interviewing; developing intervention strategies; preparing oral and written reports; planning and the appropriate use of time; and developing relationships with clients, agency personnel, and other community resources.
- C. Increase the student's awareness of their values and the impact these feelings and beliefs have on their personal and professional relationships.
- D. Provide students with the opportunity to exercise initiative and creativity in applying their knowledge, values, and skills.

II. CRITERIA FOR AGENCY SELECTION

The prime factors to be considered in the selection of an agency for student placement include:

- A. The interest and ability of the agency to provide an appropriate learning environment for the student.
- B. The commitment, expertise, and time of agency personnel to provide field instruction for the student.
- C. The ability of the necessary physical facilities to accommodate a student placement.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY

III. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY

A. Toward the Student

1. To provide information about local agencies, including their purpose and general functioning, and allow the student to participate in selecting their agency placement.
2. To facilitate the initial contact between the student and the agency by discussing appropriate methods of contact and advising on messaging at the student's request.
3. To provide a weekly seminar to assist the student in the integration of the field supervisor placement experience.
4. To explain and prepare the student for the weekly seminar's evaluation process by the field supervisor and the course instructor.
5. To make time available to the student on an as-needed basis to discuss any concerns the student might have, including making initial contact with the agency or meeting with the field supervisor to resolve any difficulties.
6. To assume final responsibility for evaluating the student, based upon the field supervisor's evaluation, the student's participation in seminars, and the student's completion of other required assignments.

B. Toward the Agency

1. To secure the agency's formal acceptance of the student being considered for field placement.
2. To provide information regarding the description and objectives of the psychology practicum courses.
3. To provide assistance in resolving any difficulties encountered by the agency, the university, or the student in planning an educational program for the student. The field practicum coordinator will be available as needed to accommodate the agency.
4. To provide the agency with the student evaluation form, and the information regarding the due dates of the evaluation and the school calendar, including holidays and vacation periods.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE AGENCY

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE AGENCY

A. Toward the Student.

1. To provide the student with a field supervisor who has sufficient educational preparation, knowledge, experience, and interest to provide supervision during the field practicum.
2. The field supervisor is requested to be available to discuss the following with the student:
 - a. Reviewing of student assignments and the method of operation.
 - b. Reviewing written and recorded material as an educational tool.
 - c. Assisting the student in incorporating the knowledge, values, and skills of psychology into professional practice.
 - d. Increasing the student's awareness of their personal attitudes and how these impact professional practice and functioning.
3. To orient the student regarding the agency's goals, objectives, functions, personnel procedures, and legal responsibilities. This orientation should occur during the first two weeks of the field practicum.
4. To provide an adequate and appropriate place for the student to work.
5. To provide a planned and quality learning experience for the student. This will involve the development of an individualized student contract outlining specific goals, objectives, and responsibilities within the first two weeks of the field practicum. This will be done in cooperation with the university coordinator.

B. Toward the University

1. To commit itself to the learning experiences afforded to students through field placements and to work through any difficulties that might inhibit this learning process.
2. To inform the university of vacations and holidays that the agency personnel observes.
3. To complete the written evaluation of the student as outlined in this manual.
4. To provide feedback to the university field practicum coordinator regarding the field placement experiences of the student, comment on the student's preparation for placement, and make appropriate suggestions for improving the psychology practicum curriculum.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT

V. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT

A. Toward the University

1. To discuss with the university field practicum coordinator their preferences for field placement experiences, given the student's background, interest, education, and future goals.
2. To fulfill the time requirements of the course. The schedule will be mutually agreeable with the agency and the student's class schedule, subject to faculty approval.
3. To notify the coordinator of any absence, due to accidents, illness, or other emergencies.
4. To develop a contract with the field supervisor outlining specific goals, objectives, and responsibilities of field placement during the first two weeks of placement. A copy of the contract must be submitted to the university coordinator for final approval. During the semester, significant changes to the contract must be incorporated into a revised contract and resubmitted to the field supervisor and university coordinator.
5. To inform and seek the assistance of the field coordinator regarding problems related to the field placement.
6. To actively participate in seminars and complete all written assignments, including logs, final papers, and assigned oral presentations by the due date in the syllabus or the date set by the weekly seminar instructor. (See course description).

B. Toward the Agency

1. To participate in the field placement experiences, meet all the agency's requirements, and complete all assigned tasks promptly by the end of the semester.
2. To develop a contract with the field supervisor outlining specific goals, objectives, responsibilities, and timelines, and to make adjustments to the contract when necessary.
3. To determine with the field supervisor how student responsibilities will be handled if the student is absent.
4. To actively participate in supervisory conferences, staff meetings, and the general functioning of the agency.
5. To notify the field supervisor in a timely manner of any absence due to accidents, illness, or other emergencies.
6. To contribute to the agency's operation through the completion of all assigned tasks

and duties.

VI. BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY – ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

It is up to the field site what background check is required. It is the student's responsibility to comply with and submit the required background and clearance requirements prior to beginning their practicum.

VII. PRACTICUM CHECKLIST

Practicum I & II are required courses in the in-person undergraduate psychology major. It is necessary to prepare well in advance for these practicum placements. If you plan to enroll in Practicum I in the fall, you must prepare **before the end of the previous spring semester**. If you plan to graduate in December, you may reverse the practicum sequence with Practicum II in the spring and complete Practicum I in the fall semester. The following checklist must be completed for the placements to be made on time.

1. Meet with the faculty advisor to finalize the course schedule for the semester you plan to start your first practicum. Try to schedule your classes to allow for one day a week free from class time so you can complete your practicum hours.
2. Schedule an appointment with the Career Services office and:
 - a. Prepare a resume
 - b. Prepare a letter or call script for initial contact with the agency
 - c. Learn about interview etiquette
 - d. Review the internship list provided by the Psychology Department Chair and any available internships on the Career Services website.
3. Schedule an appointment with the Psychology Department Chair the semester **before** your first practicum experience. Bring your resume, a list of internship possibilities, and your interest in a practicum experience to the meeting with the Psychology Department Chair.
4. Be sure to have an active Alvernia email address. Your Alvernia email address is **the only way** the Psychology Department Chair will contact you regarding your practicum placement. You should also use this email address to correspond with agency contacts.
5. The Psychology Department Chair must approve all placements. You **may not** secure a placement unless you have consulted with the Psychology Department Chair
6. For some placements, you must complete online or in-person applications directly. For other placements, the Psychology Department Chair will facilitate the initial contact and provide you with instructions on contacting the appropriate individual. You should follow through with these contacts **as soon as you are given the information**, as many agencies have multiple students who want the same practicum placement. You may need to undergo competitive interviewing for your practicum placement.
7. Every effort will be made to secure a placement within **your area of interest** in psychology. If you do not receive a response from an agency following initial contact or you are not placed at the first agency, it is your responsibility to contact the Psychology Department Chair to receive further information and guidance.
8. After your interview, email the Psychology Department Chair with the results of the interview. It is imperative that you let the Chair know when your placement is secured.
9. Be aware that you must complete additional requirements before placement. For example, some schools require TB testing in addition to the clearances.

10. If the student fails a clearance, the course instructor will attempt to place the student in a practicum that does not require a clearance. The practicum agency makes the final decision regarding accepting a student within their organization.
11. It is your responsibility to adhere to the guidelines provided in this checklist. Failure to do so may result in the inability to secure an approved placement.

VIII. STATEMENT REGARDING THE STUDENT'S ROLE IN THE AGENCY

The role of the student in the agency is a learning rather than a work role, even though it is inherent in the field placement experience that the student be assigned duties and responsibilities. By accomplishing the assigned tasks, the student will be able to integrate the theoretical with the practical application of knowledge, values, and skills. It is important that the student be regarded as a member of the staff, so that the learning experience can be complete.

To facilitate the distinction between the role of the student and the role of the agency employee, the following guidelines are offered:

1. Assignments, both in type and number, should be appropriate to the learning and experience level of the student. The assignments should complement the learning process of the field experience and progress in difficulty and responsibility.
2. The assignments should offer a wide range of experiences, so that each student may become familiar with the purpose and functions of the entire program and its place within the network of the system.
3. While it is recognized that each field placement will offer a unique learning experience, it is expected that each student has the opportunity to develop and practice skills in some of the following areas:
 - a. Observation and data collection.
 - b. Interviewing skills on a one-to-one basis.
 - c. Family and/or group intervention with clients.
 - d. Planning appropriate intervention strategies.
 - e. Involvement with and coordination of community services.
 - f. Completing the necessary paperwork and forms required by the agency.
4. Sufficient time should be allowed within the field work hours for the student to complete the assigned tasks, including the fulfillment of all necessary paperwork.
5. Participation by the student in staff meetings, in-service programs, and conferences is encouraged to broaden the learning of the student and develop a deeper understanding of the functioning of the agency.
6. The agency field supervisor should contact the university field practicum coordinator at any time during placement to answer any questions, address any concerns or resolve any

difficulties, ensuring the best possible learning environment for the student.

IX. SUGGESTIONS FOR FIELD SUPERVISOR

The field supervisor's creative development of a stimulating program is the essence of a good education. Alvernia University takes the opportunity to suggest some basic experiences for the student as they are placed in the agency for field supervision.

A. Orientation to Agency's Program

A personal interview with the director and a guided tour of the agency are considered helpful. Some familiarity with office procedures eases the student's adjustment. Learning and independence are also developed by encouraging the student to plan their own orientation to the agency with some direction from the field supervisor.

Some helpful activities include observation of the waiting room, study of the agency's administrative structure, the flow chart of the services offered, and the reading of agency reports.

B. Development of a Professional Self

As a first step toward developing a professional self, the student needs to know how they are assigned and related to the agency's work. The student also needs to have a recognized place there and understand the roles of the agency staff.

The student must develop a professional relationship with their supervisor. The student needs to understand this relationship, the place and purpose of supervision, the time of the weekly conferences, as well as their own responsibility in making the agency experience and supervisory conferences as meaningful as possible.

Confidentiality which was learned in the classroom must be internalized in work with individuals, families, and groups.

C. Experience in Interviewing

Some field supervisors have students begin by sitting in on interviews conducted by experienced interviewers. Others prefer to review the basic principles with the student and help them carefully plan their interviews. Some do both. Students need experience in both observation and practice interviewing.

D. Experience in Relating to Individuals

The development of relationships is fundamental to the development of a professional role and experiences should be planned to enhance this ability in the student. In the beginning, the assignment may be friendly visiting, but as the semester progresses, this may be expanded to experiences that develop a professional relationship, such as interviewing or assessment.

E. Experiences with Groups

Working with clients in groups will also be helpful to the student. Participation in the community meetings or observation of therapeutic groups is encouraged (when applicable).

F. Experience in Community Activities

The student needs to understand the role of the agency or program in the community and its relationship to other agencies. Identification of community social problems and other agencies and programs working in the same field as that in which the student is placed is a first step. Attendance at community meetings is desirable, if possible.

G. Analyzing a Problem and Working Toward Change

The student should have some experience in identifying a problem and planning solutions (when applicable). Students may read what others have done, but they also need to work in these situations themselves. They need to experience getting facts, analyzing situations, and planning change.

H. Recording

Every student will benefit from recording data and summarizing material: a case summary or a summary of group dynamics (when applicable). Letter writing is another important skill in which beginning ability should be developed, if possible.

I. Evaluation

The student should learn that feedback and evaluation are important components of professional growth. The final formal evaluation at the end of each semester should be a recapitulation of previous developments discussed with the student.

J. Final Evaluation by Field Supervisor

In addition to the completion of the student evaluation by the field supervisor, the following areas of the student's performance may be considered in an essay evaluation report at the end of any semester:

1. Ability to relate to others.
2. Acceptance of standards different from their own.
3. Sensitivity to the needs of people.
4. Acceptance of supervision.
5. Ability to function in the agency framework.
6. Ability to observe and record observations.
7. Ability to interview.
8. Self-awareness (conscious use of self).
9. Ability to work with individuals and provide environmental services.
10. Ability to work with groups.
11. Ability to work in the community.
12. Type and quality of any services provided.

APPENDIX

HARASSMENT POLICY **ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES**

A. BACKGROUND

It is the responsibility of each person on campus to respect the personal dignity of others. Alvernia has always encouraged its students, faculty, and staff to celebrate the diversity of the University and to immediately confront any expressions of harassment within the community based on differences in sex, race, religion, disability, or ethnic background. Your academic field experience will take you outside the Alvernia campus community. The Agency in which you will serve has been carefully screened by the University, and the Sponsoring Agency has affirmed its complete agreement with the policy of showing no tolerance for any form of harassment. The Sponsoring Agency has agreed to hold all members of its institutional community to the same high standards of respect and dignity essential to the mission of Alvernia.

B. DEFINITIONS

Sexual Harassment is one example of forbidden harassment and has been defined by the University as unwanted sexual attention, intimidation, or advances that are made:

- a. Either explicitly or implicitly as a term or condition of academic or employment status or advancement;
- b. As a basis for academic or employment decisions;
- c. Which unreasonably interferes with an individual's work or academic performance; and/or
- d. Which creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or academic environment.

C. RESOURCES

<https://www.alvernia.edu/student-life/title-ix>

Alvernia University Psychology and Counseling Department

Practicum Weekly Journal

Site Name:

Journal #:

Dates: From _____ to _____

1. Summary of duties/activities performed during the week
2. Summary of any supervision you experienced this week
3. Personal reflections: what did you learn to do this week? What additional knowledge did you gain? What is your plan for next week in terms of skills? Were there any ethical issues that you encountered this week? If so, what were they and how did they get addressed?

Total number of hours completed so far_____