



# **The University of Alabama School of Social Work**

## **Practicum Education Toolkit**



School of  
Social Work  
Office of Experiential Programs

## **Revised December 2025**

This toolkit was prepared to provide information and does not constitute a contract or personal academic plan. Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this University of Alabama School of Social Work Practicum Education Toolkit, those who use the Toolkit should note that policies and procedures change from time to time and that certain changes may not yet be reflected in this document.

Given the complexities of our program, it is impossible to address all information pertinent to students. More current or complete information may be obtained from your advisor, the Practicum education coordinator(s), or other representatives of the School of Social Work Practicum Education Program.

# Table of Contents

---

<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>About The School of Social Work and its Programs</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Mission Statement.....	5
Overall Purpose .....	5
Practicum Education Plans.....	5
<b>Practicum Education Roles/Responsibilities</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Director of Office of Experiential Programs, Practicum Education Coordinator(s), Practicum Education Program.....	7
Faculty Liaison.....	8
Practicum Instructor.....	11
Student .....	13
Practicum Education Advisory Committee .....	13
Office of Experiential Programs and Community Partnerships Committee.....	14
<b>Procedures, Guidelines and Criteria for Approval of Practicum Education Agencies</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Guidelines for Agencies .....	15
Criteria for Selecting Practicum Instructors.....	16
<b>International Practicum Placement Policy &amp; Procedures</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Practicum Education Policies</b> .....	<b>20</b>
Practicum Education Placement Service Area.....	20
Grade of Incomplete .....	20
Students Working Full Time .....	20
Background Checks .....	21
Legal Charge or Conviction .....	21
Professional Liability and Health Insurance .....	22
Accommodations for Disabilities.....	22
Title IX and Pregnancy.....	22
Academic Credit for Life Experience .....	23
<b>Procedures for Evaluation of Employment Based Practicum Placement</b> .....	<b>24</b>
Employment Based Practicum Placement Policies.....	24
<b>Employment-Based Guideline Expansion</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>Independent Intern vs. Practicum Placement Intern</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Social Media Guidelines</b> .....	<b>29</b>
Purpose of the Policy .....	29
Best Practices with Social Media in Social Work Education/Practice.....	29

**Professional Expectations: Virtual Meeting Attendance.....32**

- Introduction .....32
- Code of Conduct.....32
- Technology Requirements .....33

**Policies Affecting the Student During Placement.....34**

- Professional Ethics .....34
- Confidentiality .....34
- Academic Dishonesty .....34
- Safety.....34
- Student Use of Automobiles.....35
- Schedule .....35
- Vacations, Holidays, Semester Breaks, and Other Absences from the Practicum .....36
- Inclement Weather .....36
- Conferences, Trainings, and Webinars .....37
- Counting Travel Hours for Practicum.....37
- On-Call Hours for practicum placement .....37
- Students on Agency Stipends .....38
- Policy Conflicts .....38
- Variable Hours Practicum Education Placements.....38
- Alternative Hours.....38
- Consecutive Semester Practicum Policy .....39
- “I” and “N” grades.....40
- Student Continuation in the Agency and/or with Clients of the Agency after the End of the Placement .....40

**Evaluation and Corrective Action.....41**

- Practicum Placement Performance Evaluation.....41
- Practicum Instructor Evaluation.....41
- Practicum Education Grade .....41
- Student-Initiated Review Process .....41
- Handling Learning Difficulties in the Practicum.....42
- Practicum Staffing Procedure. ....43
- Request for an Academic and Professional Assessment Review (APAR) to Program Chair.....44

**BSW Practicum Guide .....45**

- BSW Practicum Education FAQs .....45
- Applying for BSW practicum placement .....49
- Summary of Practicum Instructor Responsibilities .....50

**MSW Practicum Guide.....52**

    BSW & MSW Practicum Education FAQs.....52

    Summary of Practicum Instructor Responsibilities .....57

**The University of Alabama Harassment Policy .....59**

    I. Statement of Policy.....59

    II. Factors Considered in Determining Existence of Harassment.....60

    III. Reporting of Harassment or Related Retaliation Allegations .....61

**Appendix A: International Practicum Placement Application .....65**

**Appendix B: Authorization for Release of Records and Information and Acknowledgement of Risk .....67**

    Authorization for Release of Records and Information .....68

    Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risk in the Practicum Placement .....69

**Appendix C: Placement Exploration Tool.....71**

# About The School of Social Work and its Programs

---

## Mission Statement

The Practicum Education Program facilitates the integration of the learning experience into practice and prepares practitioners committed to promoting justice, improving the well-being of individuals and systems, and alleviating adverse social conditions.

---

## Overall Purpose

Since the beginning of the social work profession in the late 1800s social work education has included both academic class work and actual practice experience in social service agencies. The attempt to forge a strong link between theory and practice remains a cornerstone of social work professional education. Through the Practicum education placement, students are provided with significant integrative experiences in preparation for their professional careers. The supervised practice experience or practicum is referred to in many ways including “Practicum instruction,” “supervision,” “placement,” or “internship.” The Practicum Education Toolkit outlines the structure of student practicum experiences. This manual includes all instructions, information, policies, and applications that students need to progress through this phase of the social work program. Please read the material carefully.

---

## Practicum Education Plans

### BSW Practicum Placements

- Fall Semester: 15 Weeks @ 32 hours/week = 450 hours
- Spring Semester: 15 Weeks @ 32 hours/week = 450 hours
- Summer Semester: 13 Weeks @ 36-40 hours/week = 450 hours

If the student has requested a variable placement, they are required to complete a minimum of 16 hours per week during their first semester and will finish in the following semester. This plan requires the student to complete 300 hours in the first semester and 150 hours in the following semester.

### MSW Traditional Two-Year Students Placements

- First Year Practicum:
  - Fall Semester: 10 Weeks @ 16-20 hours/week = 200 hours
  - Spring Semester: 15 Weeks @ 16-20 hours/week = 300 hours
  - Total = 500 hours
- Second Year Practicum:
  - Fall Semester: 10 Weeks @ 16-20 hours/week = 200 hours
  - Spring Semester: 15 Weeks @ 16-20 hours/week = 300 hours
  - Total = 500 hours

### MSW Advanced Standing Students Placements

- Spring Semester: 15 weeks @ 32-40 hours/week = 500 hours

If the student has requested a variable (extended) placement, they are required to complete a minimum of 16 hours per week during the spring semester and will finish in the summer semester. This plan requires the student to complete two 4.5 hour courses.

# Practicum Education Roles/Responsibilities

---

## Director of Office of Experiential Programs, Practicum Education Coordinator(s), Practicum Education Program

The Practicum Education Program, and specifically the Director of The Office of Experiential Programs and Community Partnerships, is responsible for the total instruction of the Practicum education program of the School of Social Work. This includes:

1. Evaluation and maintenance of a bank of agency resources to adequately meet student- learning needs; matching of students to specific agencies following appropriate consultation with advisors, liaisons, Practicum Instructors, and students.
2. Orientation and training of practicum education instructors, students, and Faculty Liaisons. Orientation and training for Practicum Instructors is offered on campus and on-line. Practicum meetings occur throughout the year in person and online for orientation purposes. Faculty Liaisons are oriented yearly.
3. Maintenance of legal documents necessary for Agency-University affiliations.
4. Provision of information to educational advisors/faculty and students about the variety, quantity, quality, and nature of Practicum offerings.
5. Provision and distribution of necessary Practicum education placement materials (for example, application forms, informational resources, syllabi, evaluation forms teaching/learning materials, practicum calendars, etc.) to appropriate persons.
6. Development and implementation of professional continuing education activities for Practicum Instructors.
7. Provision of consultation to Faculty Liaisons, educational advisors, students, practicum instructors, and administrators concerning a variety of issues impacting the school-agency relationships and the quality of the individual student's learning experience.
8. Interpretation of the School's philosophy of education, the organization and content of the educational curriculum, and practicum instruction standards to the community agencies and practicum instructors.
9. Provision of information to the school's administration concerning liaison assignments and matters impacting the practicum instruction program.
10. Development and implementation of professional continuing education activities for Practicum Instructors.
11. Provision of consultation to Faculty Liaisons, educational advisors, students, Practicum Instructors, and administrators concerning a variety of issues impacting the School-Agency relationships and the quality of the individual student's learning experience.
12. Interpretation of the School's philosophy of education, the organization and content of the educational curriculum, and Practicum instruction standards to the community agencies and Practicum Instructors.
13. Provision of information to the School's administration concerning liaison assignments and matters impacting the Practicum instruction program.

---

## Faculty Liaison

### Teaching Role

1. Throughout the internship, the Faculty Liaison negotiates learning opportunities and participates in the evaluation of the competencies. It is expected that the Faculty Liaison will schedule visits according to the student's cohort plan for the purpose of developing an appropriate learning contract between the student, agency, and School; monitoring the progress of the student; providing educational supports to the student and practicum instructor; troubleshooting any administrative or policy issues that may arise between the agency and School; receiving input from agencies about curriculum and practicum policy and content; identifying agency needs for consultation or training; planning for future practicum placements, and evaluating the student's learning outcomes related to the competencies.
2. When such placements are carried out successfully, students are able to acquire new knowledge and skills. Without careful supervision and monitoring, however, students may not acquire the additional skills and meet the objectives outlined in the curriculum. Therefore, the approval process and the development of appropriate employment placements are crucial. Such placement development requires the involvement of the student/employee, job supervisor and agency administrator, potential Practicum Instructor, potential Faculty Liaison, and the Director of OEPCP or Practicum Coordinator. This extra level of group involvement is essential to the development of a sound employment placement, particularly when the agency has had no previous involvement as a training agency with the school. In such situations, the agency may not be aware of the School's mission, objectives, curriculum, and expectations.
3. Faculty Liaisons are assigned each semester to all agencies in which students are placed. It is recommended that Faculty Liaisons conduct at visits according to the student's cohort plan. The normal expectation is that Faculty Liaisons will make their initial visit within the first three weeks of placement. This initial visit is essential to get the student, practicum instructor, and other agency representatives launched in the field. At midterm it is important to discuss both strengths and limitations of the student, practicum instructor, and/or agency. This is a time when the Faculty Liaison can facilitate a renegotiation of the learning contract if necessary. It is acceptable to communicate by e-mail, conference call or Zoom conference for the final contact. Communication between Faculty Liaison and Practicum Instructor via telephone, e-mail, or meetings that occur when Practicum Instructors are on campus for Practicum training meetings, is essential to monitor the educational activities. At the beginning of each practicum, Faculty Liaisons will secure the e-mail addresses of students and their associated Practicum Instructors to facilitate communication with all participants. Should problems or concerns arise in a placement, additional site visits may be needed to address problems in a timely manner.
4. The Faculty Liaison is responsible for assigning the academic grade for each practicum placement according to the specifications of the practicum placement syllabi. Practicum Instructors will recommend both a mid-term grade and a final semester grade. Sample learning contracts are included in a subsequent section of this toolkit. Grading should be discussed with the Practicum Instructor and student at the end of each semester. The Faculty Liaison carries responsibility for interpreting the application of the grading criteria to the specific situation being evaluated. The Faculty Liaison may not assign a grade without reviewing the student's performance (assignments

and evaluation materials are specified with each practicum syllabus) and without communication with the Practicum Instructor.

5. On behalf of the School, the Faculty Liaison carries responsibility for a decision to suspend (refer to Handling Difficulties in Practicum) a student's practicum placement and immediately notify the Director of OEPCP Education. The Director of OEPCP or Practicum coordinator will officially notify the student and schedule a practicum staffing to resolve problems.
6. Throughout the internship, the Faculty Liaison negotiates learning opportunities and participates in the evaluation of the competencies. It is expected that the Faculty Liaison will schedule visits according to the student's cohort plan for the purpose of developing an appropriate learning contract between the student, agency, and School; monitoring the progress of the student; providing educational supports to the student and practicum instructor; troubleshooting any administrative or policy issues that may arise between the agency and School; receiving input from agencies about curriculum and practicum policy and content; identifying agency needs for consultation or training; planning for future practicum placements, and evaluating the student's learning outcomes related to the competencies..
7. Faculty Liaisons are assigned each semester to all agencies in which students are placed. It is recommended that Faculty Liaisons conduct at visits according to the students' cohort plan. The normal expectation is that Faculty Liaisons will make their initial visit within the first three weeks of placement. This initial visit is essential to get the student, practicum instructor, and other agency representatives launched in the field. At midterm it is important to discuss both strengths and limitations of the student, practicum instructor, and/or agency. This is a time when the Faculty Liaison can facilitate a renegotiation of the learning contract if necessary. It is acceptable to communicate by e-mail, conference call or Zoom conference for the final contact. Communication between Faculty Liaison and Practicum Instructor via telephone, e-mail, or meetings that occur when Practicum Instructors are on campus for Practicum training meetings, is essential to monitor the educational activities. At the beginning of each practicum, Faculty Liaisons will secure the e-mail addresses of students and their associated Practicum Instructors to facilitate communication with all participants. Should problems or concerns arise in a placement, additional site visits may be needed to address problems in a timely manner.
8. The Faculty Liaison is responsible for assigning the academic grade for each practicum placement according to the specifications of the practicum placement syllabi. Practicum Instructors will recommend both a mid-term grade and a final semester grade. Sample learning contracts are included in a subsequent section of this toolkit. Grading should be discussed with the Practicum Instructor and student at the end of each semester. The Faculty Liaison carries responsibility for interpreting the application of the grading criteria to the specific situation being evaluated. The Faculty Liaison may not assign a grade without reviewing the student's performance (assignments and evaluation materials are specified with each practicum syllabus) and without communication with the Practicum Instructor.
9. On behalf of the School, the Faculty Liaison carries responsibility for a decision to suspend (refer to Handling Difficulties in Practicum) a student's practicum placement and immediately notify the Director of OEPCP . The Director of OEPCP or practicum coordinator will officially notify the student and schedule a practicum staffing to resolve problems.

## For Faculty Liaisons with students in Employment-Based Placement

A closer type of placement monitoring is necessary to ensure that student learning objectives are being met and that the student as a learner is clearly differentiated from the student as an employee. Therefore, it is expected that Faculty Liaison involvement in employment placements will be more intensive than in non-employment placements in order to ensure that student's learning objectives are supported and carried out throughout the semester. This intensive level of involvement may be reflected by an increased number of telephone calls or agency visits. The liaison must ensure that each practicum is structured so as to meet the fundamentally different learning objectives represented in the Practicum education syllabi.

## Faculty Liaison Guide Block Placement (One Semester)

Contact	Time Frame	Purpose/Responsibilities
Initial Contact (e-mail or phone)	Within the first full week of placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction and expectations about how to communicate</li> <li>• Schedule initial visit</li> <li>• Due dates for learning contract and calendar</li> </ul>
Initial Visit (Face to Face or Zoom Platform)	Within the first 3 weeks of placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting student and Practicum Instructor launched</li> <li>• Discussing roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Approving the initial learning contract activities and student calendar</li> <li>• Making sure all electronic signatures are submitted through the on-line database</li> </ul>
Midterm Visit (Face to Face or Zoom Platform)	<p>Shortly after the student has completed 250 hours (MSW) or 225 hours (BSW).</p> <p>For students who are in extended placements this will vary.</p> <p>For students who are completing their placements within the semester, this will normally occur around midterm for The University of Alabama</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use this time to capture student strengths and student concerns</li> <li>• If a student is below average on any competency, consider referring student for a Practicum staffing</li> <li>• Make sure student and Practicum Instructor have completed and signed the learning contract for midterm</li> <li>• The Faculty Liaison carries responsibility for interpreting the application of the grading criteria to the competency.</li> <li>• Approve the midterm learning contract</li> <li>• Making sure all electronic signatures and midterm grades are submitted through the on-line database</li> <li>• Schedule final conference</li> </ul>
Final Contact	Within two weeks of student completing final hours. This contact may be conducted by Zoom, conference call, or email.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grading should be discussed with the Practicum Instructor and student in the final contact.</li> <li>• The Faculty Liaison carries responsibility for interpreting the application of the grading criteria to the competency.</li> <li>• Do not assign a grade without reviewing the student's performance or without discussion/ consultation with the Practicum Instructor.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making sure all electronic signatures and midterm grades are submitted through the on-line database</li> </ul>
Other Visits/Contacts	As needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should problems or concerns arise in a placement, additional visits may be needed.</li> <li>• Communication between Faculty Liaison and Practicum Instructor through e-mail, phone, or meetings that occur when Practicum Instructors or students are on campus is essential to monitor educational activities.</li> </ul>

## Faculty Liaison Guide (over Two Semesters)

Contact	Time Frame	Purpose/Responsibilities
Initial Contact (e-mail or phone)	During the first week of placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction and expectations about how to communicate</li> <li>• Schedule initial visit</li> <li>• Due dates for learning contract and calendar</li> </ul>
Visit One (Face to Face or Zoom Platform)	During the month of October and month of February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting student and Practicum Instructor launched</li> <li>• Discussing roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Approving the initial learning contract activities and student calendar</li> <li>• Making sure all electronic signatures are submitted through the on-line database</li> </ul>
End of Semester Contact	Within two weeks of student completing final hours each semester. This contact may be conducted by Zoom, conference call, or email.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grading should be discussed with the Practicum Instructor and student in the final contact.</li> <li>• The Faculty Liaison carries responsibility for interpreting the application of the grading criteria to the competency.</li> <li>• Do not assign a grade without reviewing the student's performance or without discussion/ consultation with the Practicum Instructor.</li> <li>• Making sure all electronic signatures and midterm grades are submitted through the on-line database</li> </ul>
Other Visits/Contacts	As needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should problems or concerns arise in a placement, additional visits may be needed.</li> <li>• Communication between Faculty Liaison and Practicum Instructor through e-mail, phone, or meetings that occur when Practicum Instructors or students are on campus is essential to monitor educational activities.</li> </ul>

## Practicum Instructor

### Planning Role

The Practicum Instructor carries an important planning function for the student's internship. In some agencies, some or all of these activities are carried out by the agency's administrator or a coordinator for social work student placements. These planning functions include:

1. Communicating information to the Practicum Education Coordinator about potential practicum openings and any information that may impact the nature or quality of the placement.
2. Following receipt of the student's practicum application from the Practicum Education Program, the Practicum Instructor confirms that the referral appears to be an appropriate one and responds to the student's request for scheduling the placement confirmation interview.
3. Should the Practicum Instructor learn information in the confirmation interview that leads her/him to question the viability of the planned placement, they are responsible for discussion of the issues with the Practicum Education Program and so they can take appropriate action.

## Teaching Role

Throughout the practicum education placements, the Practicum Instructor's primary role is as the teacher and facilitator of student learning. To this end the Practicum Instructor:

1. Provides for the student's orientation to the agency's policies and procedures, ethical standards, and safety precautions.
2. Negotiates and plans student assignments in accordance with the practicum competencies as identified in each Learning Contract respective to each student's practicum course.
3. Provides educational supervision/practicum instruction for each student for at least one hour per week.
4. Serves as an advocate for the student within the agency by facilitating the student's access to productive learning experiences and other learning activities/resources (for example, student participation in activities outside the agency such as professional conferences, relevant library work, or practicum visits to other programs) during the practicum.
5. Evaluates the student's performance in the agency with regard to the specified practicum competencies formally at mid-term and final and evaluates samples of the students learning.
6. Serves as the primary educational resource.

## Task Supervisor

1. Provides secondary practicum instruction to student on a specific task, project, or assignment as delegated and monitored by the practicum instructor.
2. Responsible for the day-to-day on site guidance for specific project, case, or task.
3. Collaborates with practicum instructor in integrating assignments provided by task supervisor into student's overall learning experience.
4. Keeps practicum instructor informed of student's progress on projects, cases undertaken with task supervisor.
5. Provides input to the student's evaluation in collaboration with the practicum instructor and student. Task supervisor provides input, and participates when possible, in the development of the initial learning contract. Task supervisor may also be present in the midterm and final learning evaluations to provide input related to the students progress in the practicum.

6. Assists in the orientation process for specific cases, projects, assignments, etc. in collaboration with the practicum instructor.
  7. Collaborates with practicum instructor and provides input regarding student's learning assessments and evaluations.
  8. The task supervisor typically has expertise in an area that expands a student's learning opportunities.
- 

## Student

Practicum courses are restricted to students who have met the appropriate prerequisites for the practicum they are applying for and to those who have completed the application process. To plan for practicum, the student is responsible for completing the following:

- Practicum application, to be accompanied by a current résumé (<https://socialwork.ua.edu/academics/office-of-experiential-programs-community-partnerships/applying-for-practicum/>)
- Background Check (See Policy and Procedure Section.)
- Practicum Education Orientation (See Policy and Procedure Section.)
- Appropriate Practicum Forms (See Forms Section.)

The student is responsible for follow-through on utilization of practicum information sources provided by the School; for example, discussions with Practicum Coordinators; and information available through the Practicum Education Program. The student is responsible for conveying sufficient information to the Practicum Education Program about personal needs, goals, interests, constraints, and/or special circumstances regarding the placement site. Once a student receives an e-mail assigning them to a specific agency, the student is responsible for contacting the agency within 72 hours for a confirmation interview. This will allow the student to participate in a confirmation interview with the practicum instructor to assure quality of fit between the student and the agency. In the event that the confirmation interview raises serious questions in the student's mind about the viability of the placement, they are responsible for immediately raising those issues with their designated Practicum Coordinator.

Throughout the practicum, the student is held accountable to all School and agency policies. Most importantly, the student is responsible for her/his own learning.

---

## Practicum Education Advisory Committee

The Practicum Education Advisory Committee (PEAC) serves in an advisory capacity to the Practicum Education Program. The PEAC makes recommendations to the Practicum Education Program regarding Practicum education policies and procedures, and practicum education as the signature pedagogy.

Advice may be given on such matters as practicum education syllabi, methods of evaluating student performance in their Practicum education classes; professional development for Practicum Instructors; and procedures for recommending students for practicum placements.

The Director of OEPCP serves as the chair of this committee. The committee meets at least twice during the academic year. The PEAC is composed of members representing agencies, students, and faculty. (Approved by faculty 9/1/10).

---

## **Office of Experiential Programs and Community Partnerships Committee**

The Office of Experiential Programs and Community Partnerships Committee (OEPCP) is composed of five to six faculty members who frequently teach classes and serve as supervisors or liaisons in the respective program and are appointed by the Dean. In addition, the OEPCP will include student representatives; one main campus and one distance learning BSW, and one main campus and one distance learning MSW on the Office of Experiential Programs and Community Partnerships. Student members have voting responsibilities regarding the curriculum and related matters. Students may be excluded from discussion of such topics as admissions, personnel, and scholarships. Each committee is chaired by the respective program chair, who votes only when there is a tie. Each program committee has responsibilities in the areas of (a) student recruitment, admissions, and retention and (b) curriculum planning and review.

# Procedures, Guidelines and Criteria for Approval of Practicum Education Agencies

---

Quite regularly, the School of Social Work receives requests from agency staff and faculty to consider new agencies as potential practicum education sites. The School of Social Work has a commitment to provide relevant and appropriate practicum experiences for our students, which means staying abreast of new methods and areas of practice in our practicum. The process of approving new agencies, training practicum education instructors, and monitoring is quite time consuming for faculty. Therefore, the following procedures for responding to these inquiries have evolved from administrative and faculty decisions over the years.

1. All initial requests will go to and be acknowledged by the Director of OEPCP and/or Practicum Coordinators.
2. The first criterion considered is whether the agency is in a geographic location currently used by the School.
3. Next, the decision will be made regarding whether the learning experiences provided by that agency are appropriate, meet CSWE competencies, and are needed. A decision also is reached on whether agency assignments are more appropriate for BSW, MSW first year, MSW second-year/Advanced Standing, or some combination of these levels.
4. If the agency and potential Practicum Instructor(s) meet the School criteria, as judged from the information received, the Director of OEPCP or a designated faculty member will make a site visit/Zoom conference or conduct a conference call to evaluate the agency and complete an "Evaluation of Practicum Site."
5. If the agency and potential Practicum Instructor(s) are evaluated positively and approval is recommended, the Agency Agreement will be processed through the agency and the University. A fully signed copy is returned to the agency.
6. If the decision is made to discontinue the approval process at any of the above steps, the agency will be notified by the Director of OEPCP or Practicum Coordinators.
7. Information concerning the new agency will be passed on to faculty and students (final approval may hinge on whether there is any student interest in the agency). During the evaluation process, agencies are requested to provide some type of student stipend if possible.

---

## Guidelines for Agencies

1. The services provided are recognized in the community as having a credible social services function and the agency is legally established with financial support. Licensing by the state where indicated, is completed, and membership in a national standard-setting body appropriate to its function is desirable.
2. The administration and staff should be qualified by education and experience and have an understanding of professional social work education and its goals. The Agency Agreement between the University and agency must be completed so that the commitment and responsibilities of the various persons associated with practicum instruction are understood. The agency's governing body should be aware of and approve staff involvement with students and social work education.

3. The social service program should have employed staff to assure program continuity without total reliance upon students.
4. The program should provide sufficient activities for a sufficient number of clients to serve the learning needs of the students to be assigned. Opportunities for learning and agency practice should include a range of client population groups extending across gender, age, race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, disability, social problems, etc.; and social work functions must be appropriate for student learning.
5. The program and its administration must operate in accord with the philosophy and goals of the social work profession and The University of Alabama.
6. In partnership with the School of Social Work, the agency administration identifies staff members who may qualify to be Practicum Instructors and jointly participates with the School in their selection. Practicum Instructors must provide sufficient time for teaching students. This includes participating in conferences with students (for at least one clock hour per week) and faculty, monitoring the activities of the student, and occasional meetings necessary for the continued development of the practicum education program.
  - a. The agency makes a commitment to release the agency employee who serves as the Practicum Instructor from their normal duties for the amount of time necessary to plan the student's learning experiences, supervise the student's progress, and attend Practicum Instructor Workshops and other meetings and seminars related to practicum education.
  - b. The School of Social Work continues to offer practicum training and on-line contact hours free of charge.
7. The agency should provide students with suitable desks, telephone access, supplies, support services such as secretarial time, and miscellaneous expenses incurred in providing agency services. Specifically, transportation costs associated with agency business should be reimbursed.
8. In a few situations the social services program may have the quantity and quality of learning experiences available but may not have a staff member available to be or qualified to be a practicum education instructor. If this agency service is not available to students elsewhere and there are faculty resources available to fulfill the practicum instruction function, temporary approval for a practicum site assignment for specifically qualified students may be requested. The Director of OEPCP may provide that temporary approval. In such cases, the agency administration will assign a staff member as a task supervisor to insure that monitoring of the student's work is in accord with the agency program policies. Faculty assigned to the practicum instruction role in an agency program must be provided appropriate space and resources for the successful completion of the instructional responsibility. Students are assigned to a practicum education site only with the authorization of agency staff and the Practicum Education Program.

---

## Criteria for Selecting Practicum Instructors

The selection of social workers as Practicum Instructors is generally based on the nomination of a staff member by the agency administrator or by the volunteering of a qualified individual with the approval of their supervisor or administrator. These individuals must have earned an MSW from an accredited social work program and should have at least two years of post-Master's degree experience. It is preferred that these individuals are certified by the Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW), maintain a current

Social Work license (LMSW or LICSW), or have other regional or national recognition of their qualifications for practice in reference to their area of specialty.

It is preferred that MSW placements are supervised by an individual who has both a MSW degree as well as practice experience. However, some areas in Alabama and surrounding states have an under-supply of qualified social workers. Each circumstance will be considered on its own merits. If the coordinators of practicum and the agency can locate an MSW (e.g., another agency staff member, member of the board of directors, or an agency consultant—individuals who are familiar with the caseload and organization of the agency), this individual's appointment as Practicum Instructor will be considered. In such cases, an experienced staff member will be asked to serve as a Task Supervisor to monitor the student's performance of agency policies and daily responsibilities. In rare instances, faculty members may be asked to serve as Practicum Instructors to ensure educational monitoring of a placement. If a student is requesting a employment placement the agency is responsible for providing MSW supervision for students (see employment policy). In all cases, the issue of appropriate placement monitoring is a predominant concern of the Director of OEPCP.

Practicum Instructors should plan time involvement that includes the following:

1. A practicum education placement confirmation interview with the student(s) assigned;
2. Verification to the School of Social Work that the student(s) are accepted;
3. An orientation of the student(s) accepted to the agency that familiarizes the student with agency working practices, policies, safety issues, and procedures; review of the School's evaluation criteria with the student at the beginning of placement;
4. A minimum of one hour for regular (weekly) practicum education supervision sessions with the student(s);
5. Preparation of the mid-term and final evaluation of students;
6. Conferences with the Faculty Liaison and the student to plan student learning experiences and to evaluate student progress;
7. Attendance at workshops and other practicum instruction meetings as planned by the School of Social Work; Additional meetings that might arise in the course of a student's practicum experience.

# International Practicum Placement Policy & Procedures

---

1. Decide whether an international placement could meet your learning and life goals.
2. Decide whether you are willing to tolerate potential health and safety risks associated with international travel and can afford the opportunity (limited financial assistance available).
3. Determine if you meet the following preferred qualifications:
  - a. For undergraduate students: good academic standing, at least 19 years of age
  - b. For graduate students: concentration year
  - c. Adaptable, patient, responsible, dependable, self-directed, flexible, possessing initiative, comfort with ambiguity and uncertainty (with references who can provide evidence of these characteristics)
4. Articulate your rationale for seeking an international placement.
5. Meet with Director of OEPCP to begin the exploration process at least two semesters in advance of the semester in which the placement will take place.
6. Complete the International Placement Screening Process to include:
  - a. Completion of International practicum placement Coversheet
  - b. Completion of the Screening Essay describing rationale for seeking international placement, potential learning goals for the placement, and how this relates to your future professional plans
  - c. Submission of two references, one or both can be from instructors/professors, and one can be from some other person familiar with your character and/or abilities.
  - d. Have a U.S. Passport with at least one year remaining on those Passports.
  - e. Assure that they can meet academic requirements for degree completion within the constraints presented by an international placement.
7. Indicate via the SWIS Practicum application an interest in an international placement and complete the international application in SWIS.
8. Complete Capstone International Center study-abroad application and any additional requirements set forth by that office.
9. Review School of Social Work Student Financial Award Policy to ascertain eligibility for financial support from the School. Students are responsible for all costs associated with their international placements (e.g., housing, transportation, etc.).
10. All requirements necessary for practicum placements in the U.S. are also expected for those seeking international placements including orientations and information sessions, as well as, background clearance, use of the IPT system, and so on.
11. Formal, written agreements are used with all international practicum placement organizations to delineate the roles and responsibilities of the School, the Practicum organization, and the student. The agreement indicates the expectations and policies/procedures to which the UA/SSW, the organization, and the student are expected to abide. These agreements are kept on file with the Practicum Education Program. This process should be completed prior to a student beginning their placement (if it is not, the student will need to pursue an alternate placement).

## 12. Students who experience difficulties during international experience

- a. Notify, via the most expedient manner (voice, email, etc.) the Coordinator of International Programs and/or their Faculty Liaison.
- b. See the Handling Difficulties in Practicum policy for additional policy information.
- c. If the U.S. State Department issues an official Travel Warning for the country in which the student is placed, the University requires removal of the student from placement.

**InternationalSocialWork@ua.edu or ISW@ua.edu**

View Appendix A to access the International Practicum Placement Application.

# Practicum Education Policies

---

## Preparing for Practicum Education

### Practicum Education Placement Service Area

The primary service area of The University of Alabama School of Social Work is the state of Alabama. The School commits itself to providing education for students located throughout the state as well as nationally and internationally to developing and utilizing qualified practicum agencies as practicum educational sites. Both main campus and distance learning students can explore international placements. In addition, the School has developed a special program that provides practicum education opportunities with Faculty Liaison and supervision in the Washington, DC, area for students in the second year of the MSW program and BSW or BSW eligible students.

However, to be eligible for national placements the student must be a distance learner living in the state where they are seeking placement. It is expected that main campus students will be placed in the Tuscaloosa/Birmingham area.

All placements are initiated by the Practicum Education Program. Students within the state of Alabama should not contact agencies to inquire about placement opportunities. Students who reside out of state will be responsible for helping secure potential practicum placement locations. The Practicum Program will contact out-of-state students at the appropriate time to begin the process and will provide more information about the Placement Exploration Tool (PET) form, Appendix C, at that time.

The Practicum Education Program cannot guarantee a practicum placement in the town in which you are living. We will make every effort to place you close to home; however, the Practicum Education Program's priority is making an educationally sound placement. Students need to be prepared to drive at least 60 miles away from their primary geographic location to accommodate placement. It is important to note that changing geographic preferences once the practicum application has been submitted is only considered as an exception. Exceptions will be considered by the Director on a case-by-case basis. To apply for the exception the following form must be filled out. [Click here](#) to access the request form.

Please do acknowledge that changing your location preference may delay your entry to your practicum placement and may impact your graduation timeline.

---

### Grade of Incomplete

Students will not be allowed to carry a grade of Incomplete or "I" for social work courses into their Practicum education placement. Thus, any "I" must be completed by the beginning of the semester in which the student is scheduled to enter practicum. Failure to complete full responsibilities for coursework will delay a student's entry into Practicum.

---

### Students Working Full Time

Students working full-time should consider all options of how to significantly reduce or discontinue their work commitments to accommodate the demands of practicum education placement. The competing demands of practicum education, other classes, and full-time employment tend to detract from the overall learning experience of all educational activities. Students are expected to be in practicum for a minimum of 16 to 20 hours per week based on their practicum term during what are considered

traditional business hours and are required to earn 450 hours for BSW and 500 hours for MSW in each practicum placement. Students are required to be in practicum a minimum of 16 hours per week.

---

## Background Checks

ALL students MUST have a background check on file in the Practicum Education Program prior to entering practicum education. You will upload your background check through SWIS platform. Failure to submit your background check to the Practicum Education Program will delay your entry into practicum.

Background check information and instructions are given to BSW students during their SW 444 course prior to entering practicum education. The background information and instructions are provided to the MSW first-year and advanced-standing students during their acceptance or orientation to the MSW program.

ALL background checks, regardless if students are in state or out of state, should be completed via Castle Branch, a DISA Healthcare company.

If you did not receive the out of state background check information at orientation or in SW 444, you will need to contact the Practicum Education Office for the instruction guide, as the instructions will vary by state.

- International Students
  - International students must complete the CPT form through Capstone International each semester they are in practicum.
  - International students must reach out to their Practicum Coordinator as soon as possible to begin the placement process.

Failure to follow through with the required background check will impede entry into practicum placement. Students will NOT be allowed to begin their practicum placement until background checks have been completed and cleared. All practicum students are required to present a copy of their completed background check to their agency within the first week of practicum. Agency instructors are expected to send students to the School of Social Work Practicum Office if a copy is not provided at these times.

---

## Legal Charge or Conviction

Some state licensure boards for social workers (including Alabama's) inquire about whether the applicant has been charged with or convicted of a misdemeanor or a felony prior to allowing the applicant to sit for the licensure examination. The School strongly recommends that any applicant/student in this situation consult with Practicum Coordinator to discuss how best to address this issue. Students with felony convictions need to be aware that many agencies will not be open to them. The Practicum Education Program will work to secure a placement but cannot guarantee a placement can be secured in a timely manner. Students are responsible for disclosing to the agency the nature of the charges and reason for unsuitable background check. The student must request the agency send to the Practicum Education Program a statement acknowledging review of the background check results and confirming acceptance of placement.

---

## Professional Liability and Health Insurance

The University of Alabama provides professional liability insurance for students. However, if a student would like to purchase professional liability insurance above and beyond the University's coverage, NASW provides a reasonably priced policy for student members; application forms for NASW membership and Professional Liability Insurance through NASW are available online at <http://www.naswinsurancetrust.org/>.

**Employment Based Students Only:** Please note that if you are requesting or have been approved to be placed in an employment practicum you must provide proof of liability coverage from your employment agency.

Students who are in practicum placements are advised to be sure their health coverage will provide for any injuries, accidents, or illness which may be incurred in the practicum placement.

The UA-SW Agency Agreement specifies that health and liability insurance coverage rests with the student, not with the agency. In addition to obtaining health coverage, students are urged to discuss any concerns about their potential health or safety hazards in the practicum site with their advisor and/or liaison.

---

## Accommodations for Disabilities

Any student who because of a disability may need special arrangements or accommodations to meet the requirements of a course must present documentation of the disability to the Office for Disability Services (ODS), located at 1000 Houser Hall, Phone 205-348-4285 (Voice) or 205- 348-3081 (TTY) [ods.ua.edu](mailto:ods.ua.edu). ODS will prepare letters addressed to the Director of OEPCP or Practicum coordinator that indicate the reasonable accommodation to which the student is entitled. It is the student's responsibility to present the accommodation letter to the Director of OEPCP or Practicum Coordinator. This should be done prior to or during the time period in which the Practicum Coordinator is selecting a practicum placement for the student so that accommodations can be arranged. Students should request clinical accommodation. Examples of accommodations include, but are not limited to, excusing absences, submitting work after a deadline, providing alternatives to make up missed work, accommodating an alternative schedule, or retaking a semester. Please note that your accommodations cannot be activated unless they are filed with the Practicum Education Program. If the Practicum Education Coordinator has questions or concerns about the special arrangements or accommodation, he/she will consult with the Office for Disability Services and/or the Office of the Assistant Dean in the School of Social Work.

No student will be denied accommodations noted in the letter from ODS.

---

## Title IX and Pregnancy

Students who become pregnant may contact the **Title IX Office** 2418 Capitol Hall, ((205) 348-5496) to request assistance with accommodations . The Title IX Office may facilitate communications with the student's professors or assist with other University resources. Visit here: <https://provost.ua.edu/pregnant-and-parenting-student-faq/> for frequently asked questions and their answers about the University's compliance with this aspect of Title IX. In addition, the Practicum Program will connect students who identify as pregnant with the Title IX Office.

---

## Academic Credit for Life Experience

Academic credit for life experience and previous work experience will not be given in whole or in part in lieu of the practicum education course or any other course in the BSW or MSW program.

# Procedures for Evaluation of Employment Based Practicum Placement

---

It is essential that social work students accurately represent their legal and professional status within their employment settings. If you are a University of Alabama Social Work student employed at an approved practicum site governed by the University's Practicum Affiliation Agreement and under contract with the Social Work Program, you are serving as a student intern. In this role, you are practicing under the supervision and licensure of both the School of Social Work Program faculty and appropriately licensed agency staff.

After thorough evaluation, the School of Social Work may grant approval for a student to complete practicum requirements as an employee of an organization based on the following guidelines:

1. Interested students have reviewed the employment-based policies and procedures.
2. If criteria can be met at agency, student must complete the Employment-Based Practicum Application. (put link to application--- on SSW website)
3. Student must indicate desire to seek employment-based practicum on the application in SWIS. Employment-based practicum applications must be submitted with appropriate signatures by the specified deadline in order to be considered.
4. The Practicum Education Program will review the application and contact the identified employer to initiate exploration of the requested practicum education placement. Subsequently, a meeting with designated administrators will be conducted, and a decision will be made by a Practicum Coordinator or the Director of OEPCP concerning your application.
5. If employer is supportive of the application and practicum proposal, the employer will then be asked to sign a contract which commits the organization to provide specified learning experiences for the practicum, including professional social work supervision/practicum instruction.

## Employment Based Practicum Placement Policies

Use of a student's employment as a practicum education site is an exception rather than a standard placement option. This option is recommended to be completed one time, either for your BSW practicum placement, first year MSW practicum placement, or second year / Advanced Standing practicum placement. This is to ensure that all educational goals are met with varying experiences. Exceptions are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Director of OEPCP. To request an exception, please fill out the following form. Click the link here. This option is not available for those students that are in their probationary stage of employment.

Whenever possible, placement at non-employment agencies is preferable. Employment placements, however, have enabled many students to complete their education while still remaining employed. The role of the Practicum Education Program is to make a determination of whether a student's specific agency of employment meets the standards set by the Council on Social Work Education and the School of Social Work for a practicum education site.

If a site is approved, the practicum office is responsible for managing this site through a contractual agreement between the school and the agency. A Faculty Liaison will be assigned to the agency to ensure that the student's educational objectives are met.

When such placements are carried out successfully, students are able to acquire new knowledge and skills. Without careful supervision and monitoring, however, students may not acquire the additional skills

and meet the objectives outlined in the curriculum. Therefore, the approval process and the development of appropriate employment placements are crucial. Such placement development requires the involvement of the student/employee, job supervisor and agency administrator, potential Practicum Instructor, potential Faculty Liaison, and the Director of OEPCP or Practicum Coordinator. This extra level of group involvement is essential to the development of a sound employment placement, particularly when the agency has had no previous involvement as a training agency with the school. In such situations, the agency may not be aware of the School's mission, objectives, curriculum, and expectations.

# Employment-Based Guideline Expansion

---

The following are explanations of the aforementioned conditions:

1. **The student-employee's assignments must enable the student to meet the learning competencies which are defined in the learning contracts.**

The curriculum of the School of Social Work specifies educational objectives to be met for each practicum education course. Depending on which year of practicum education placement the student is entering, the employment agencies must provide opportunities for the employee-student to meet either BSW, MSW first- year, or MSW second year/ Advanced Standing competencies. When considering an application for an employment placement, the student and the employer must review all relevant course competencies and must determine if they can be met within the agency. If there is agreement between the student, supervisor, and agency administrator, the student may fill out the employment application for practicum placement and send the application to the Practicum Education Program.

2. **The School of Social Work must be assured that the student's educational experience is valued by the agency and that the agency is willing to make programmatic accommodations to the student's learning needs.**

An appropriate learning environment must be created within the agency. The student's educational program will demand time on the part of both student and the agency. The student must be released from agency responsibilities in order to fulfill educational requirements.

Structural arrangements must be made so that the student will be able to differentiate times during which the student is fulfilling the role of learner from times in which the student is fulfilling the role of employee. Students must be willing to assist colleagues in understanding the transition they must make between the staff and student roles. Some students find that employment placements require work weeks that are substantially longer than 40 hours in order to complete both work tasks and to meet educational objectives. Likewise, students may find it necessary to extend the length of their employment placements in order for educational requirements to be met.

3. **The student must be assigned a qualified, MSW Practicum Instructor who meets the requirements of the School as specified in the manual.**

Clear separation of the student's learner and employee roles is best accomplished if the Practicum Instructor and the supervisor are two different individuals. It is the policy of the school that these two roles be separated in employment placements. It is the responsibility of the agency to provide MSW supervision by a MSW from a CSWE accredited program with two years of post-graduate experience who does not also supervise the student for duties related to employment.

4. **The Practicum education placement must be educationally driven and must afford students the opportunity to fully meet all competencies specified in the Practicum education syllabi. Thus, employment placements must be educationally sound for the student.**

The scope of the agency services must be sufficiently broad so as to meet all of the students' educational competencies. Program competencies should be reviewed by the student and the student's employer prior to making a request for an employment placement. These competencies will also be reviewed by the evaluator at the time of the agency visit. The Director of OEPCP makes the final determination regarding the educational soundness of the employment placement.

5. **All employment placement requests must be submitted at the time of the Practicum application in SWIS. The employment application and appropriate signatures should be submitted by the specified date to the Practicum Program in order to be considered. The employment request will be evaluated and approved by the designated Practicum Coordinator or the Director of OEPCP.**

6. **The employment application specifying how the placement is to be structured is to be submitted by the student to the Practicum Office before the employment placement visit has occurred.**

The application must be signed by the Practicum Instructor, student, student's direct supervisor, and student's agency administrator

7. **Once a employment application has been turned in, a employment conference will be held to determine approval and educational soundness.**

The Practicum Instructor, student's direct supervisor, and student's agency administrator should be present at the initial visit.

8. **Students will be responsible for demonstrating that the competencies and time requirements have been met through the learning contract.**

## Independent Intern vs. Practicum Placement Intern

---

It is essential that social work students accurately represent their legal and professional status within their internship settings. If you are selected as an intern or hired by an agency and it is not coordinated by the University of Alabama School of Social Work Program, then you are not practicing in an approved Social Work Practicum. This means that although some agencies hire students in an “intern” position, neither the agency nor you may assert, suggest, or imply that you are practicing under a UA SSW Practicum contract. This means that no supervision and oversight is provided by the UA SSW program and no curriculum credit is gained.

# Social Media Guidelines

---

## Purpose of the Policy

The use of social media by social work students may impact present and future relationships with peers, co-workers, faculty, clients, Practicum Instructors/agencies, and employers. The Social Work Program has developed these guidelines to help students reduce risk as they enter the Social Work Program, and to learn how to use social media in professional ways. This policy incorporates guidance from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics, the NASW Technology Standards for Practice, and Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) EPAS competencies provide guidance on the use of social media.

These guidelines apply to all forms of digital communication and social media, including but not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, YouTube, Reddit, X (Twitter), Discord, WhatsApp, and GroupMe.

## Best Practices with Social Media in Social Work Education/Practice

The Internet, digital technologies and mobile devices have created the ability for students and social workers to communicate and share information quickly and to reach millions of people easily.

Participating in social networking and other similar Internet opportunities can support a student's personal expression, enable individual social workers to have a professional presence online, foster collegiality and camaraderie within the profession, and provide the opportunity to widely advocate for social policies and other communication. Social networks, blogs, and other forms of communication online also create new challenges to the social worker-client relationship. Students should weigh a number of considerations when maintaining a presence online:

### 1. Maintain Confidentiality

Students should be cognizant of standards of client privacy and confidentiality which must be maintained in all environments, including online and digital, and must refrain from posting any and all identifiable client information online.

### 2. Use Privacy Settings Wisely

When using the internet for social networking, students should use privacy settings to safeguard personal information and content to the extent possible but should realize that privacy settings are not absolute and that once on the internet, content is likely there permanently.

### 3. Monitor Your Digital Footprint

Additionally, students should routinely monitor their own Internet presence to ensure that the personal and professional information on their own sites and, to the extent possible, content posted about them by others, is accurate and appropriate.

When using the internet for professional networking, students should work to build professional online communities that support the values of the social work profession by developing authentic, ethical digital profiles and contributing content that is appropriate, respectful, and credible.

### 4. Keep Boundaries with Clients

If they interact with clients on the internet, students must maintain appropriate boundaries of the social worker-client relationship in accordance with NASW Code of Ethics, just as they would in any other context.

- a. To maintain appropriate professional boundaries students should consider separating personal and professional content online.
- b. Students must not befriend, follow, or direct message clients on personal accounts

## 5. Act When You See Ethical Concerns

When students see content posted by colleagues that appears unprofessional, they have a responsibility to bring that content to the attention of the individual, so that they can remove it and/or take other appropriate actions. If the behavior significantly violates professional norms and the individual does not take appropriate action to resolve the situation, the student should report the matter to a supervisor or faculty member.

## 6. Uphold the Reputation of the Profession

Students must recognize that actions online and content posted may negatively affect their reputation among clients and colleagues, may have consequences for their social work careers, and can undermine public trust in the social work profession. Content posted online should be respectful, inclusive, and aligned with social work values, even on personal accounts.

## 7. Accountability and Consequences

Students are expected to adhere to these guidelines as part of their professional responsibilities. Violations, especially those involving client confidentiality, breaches of ethical boundaries, or unprofessional conduct, may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the School of Social Work and University policies.

### Examples of good and ethical practice tasks include:

1. Develop and maintain a [LinkedIn](#) account, a social networking site designed for professional networking.
2. Create your own professional social media policy. See [Dr. Keely Kolmes' policy](#) for a good example.
3. Download a copy of the University of Buffalo, School of Social Work's [Social Worker's Guide to Social Media](#) and post near your desk as a helpful reminder when using social media.
4. Review this [curated list of resources](#) (articles, blog posts and podcasts) from the University of Buffalo's School of Social Work about social media and other digital technologies in social work practice.
5. Review the [Netiquette Home Page](#) to learn about do's and don'ts of online communication.

### Adapted from:

American Medical Association. (2011). Opinion 9.124 - Professionalism in the Use of Social Media. Retrieved from: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/physician-resources/medical-ethics/code-medical-ethics/opinion9124.page>

### References:

Shea, V. (n.d.). Netiquette. Retrieved from: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/>.

University of Buffalo's School of Social Work. (n.d.) Additional Resources on Social Media and Social Work. Retrieved from: <https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/social-media-guide/resources.html>

University of Buffalo's School of Social Work & 12 Grain Studio. (n.d.) Social Workers Guide to Social Media. Retrieved from: <https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/social-media-guide.html>

## **Policy Maintenance**

Last Reviewed: July 2025

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as needed to reflect current best practices, ethical standards, and evolving digital platforms.

# Professional Expectations: Virtual Meeting Attendance

---

## Introduction

As a distance learner, you will attend a variety of school functions via Zoom, UA's designated video communications platform, and others like it. These will include trainings, orientations, meetings, and liaison appointments. At these and all other virtual events, your active, focused participation is essential to your success. With that in mind, you are expected to conduct yourself as professionally in these virtual settings as you would in person.

These expectations embody the School's commitment to the ethical and professional standards set by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Students must engage with one another, the Practicum Office, course instructors, agency partners, and client systems in accordance with those standards, and virtual conduct is no exception.

The first of the nine competencies defined by CSWE serves as the foundation for each virtual policy, and as a student and professional-in-training, you are tasked with demonstrating this competency by:

- Using reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations;
- Demonstrating professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
- Using technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and
- Using supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior

The policies outlined below, unless formally waived by a meeting host or prior accommodation, will apply to every virtual event, and failure to follow them may result in a professional preparedness intervention. With that in mind, please study this code carefully before attending your first online event and abide by its terms.

## Code of Conduct

- I. Connect using a laptop or desktop computer from a safe, private space. Under no circumstances are students to connect while driving or using public transit, while participating in another class, or while attending any other event. Students who connect from work may only do so with their supervisor's approval and must use a workspace removed from interactions with coworkers and clients.
- II. Communicate respectfully with your classmates, School representatives, agency partners, and clients in writing and over microphone. Do not interrupt another speaker, do not send private messages at inappropriate times during presentations and be careful to avoid unprofessional language in your written messages.
- III. Connect on-time and remain until dismissed. Attendance will be taken shortly after the beginning of the event and verified consistently throughout. Late arrivals and early departures will be marked as absent.
- IV. Focus actively on the material presented or the conversation at hand. Minimize environmental or social distractions, leave your webcam connected and oriented towards you at all times, remain at your computer for the duration of the session, and do not use your device for anything other than participating in the event.

- a. **Note:** Should the meeting host determine that you are inattentive, you will receive a written warning, and if the identified behavior or any related behavior continues, you will be disconnected from the event and cited for a professional development intervention.
- V. Dress and conduct yourself professionally as you would during a classroom presentation. Wear business casual attire and do not connect from bed or from any other inappropriate location in your home.
- VI. Plan meals around sessions unless invited to eat during an event. Although you may always snack or drink water as necessary during any meeting, please do not allow either activity to become a distraction as described in III.

## Technology Requirements

Purpose: As an understanding of emerging technology is required to participate fully and successfully in School programming, each student is also expected to meet the following technical requirements:

- I. Ensure that you have a reliable laptop computer with a functional web camera and microphone available for personal use.
- II. Test your equipment to ensure that it functions as intended at least 24 hours prior to any meeting.
- III. Verify that you understand how to navigate any relevant video software, (e.g., Zoom, FlipGrid, etc.), and contact the meeting host in advance if you require special assistance or accommodation with regard to its operation or that of any other program.
- IV. Mute your microphone whenever it is not in use to prevent audio feedback and ensure that others are not distracted by the noise.
- V. Report any unforeseen malfunction that occurs during a session to the meeting host promptly and through an appropriate channel of communication. Make every effort to reconnect to the meeting as soon as you're able or, when appropriate, make use of an alternative device.

# Policies Affecting the Student During Placement

---

## Professional Ethics

It is understood that students will adhere to the expected standards for professional, ethical conduct and to the agency's policies and procedures as long as these are not in conflict with the NASW Code of Ethics. The NASW Code of Ethics can be accessed at <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>. These materials delineate the expected standards for professional conduct. A salient issue for students during the practicum is that of confidentiality of case records and recordings. The only individuals outside the agency with whom the student may share confidential client materials are through the seminar course or Faculty Liaison.

***A student's failure to adhere to the expected standards for professional, ethical conduct will be considered grounds for initiating a professional preparedness review.***

---

## Confidentiality

The agency agrees to provide University students who are involved in the agency's clinical training experiences with training/orientation on agency's policies and procedures and applicable state and federal laws and regulations, including HIPAA Privacy Standards, related to confidentiality of individually identifiable health information of clients and FERPA standards related to confidentiality of educational records. The University agrees to require its students placed in the agency's clinical training sites to comply with the agency's policies and procedures related to confidential health information. The University agrees to not require its students to use or disclose any individually identifiable health information about any agency's patients in any reports, essays, class discussions, etc., and agrees to report to the agency any unauthorized use or disclosure or protected health information obtained from access to patients or records of the agency.

---

## Academic Dishonesty

Policies regarding academic honesty and plagiarism extend to student Practicum education placement representations of interaction with clients, Practicum Instructors, and agency staff. Students who fabricate interactions or required attendance will be referred internally to an Academic and Professional Assessment Review (APAR) and externally to the University's Academic Misconduct Review. Please refer to policies specified in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs, and the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers.

---

## Safety

The safety of students in Practicum is of prime importance to the School of Social Work and to Practicum agencies. (See Appendix B, Authorization for Release of Records and Information and Acknowledgement of Risk in the practicum placement.) It is imperative that students feel safe in order to carry out their responsibilities in the Practicum. If safety concerns arise for a student, it is important that the student discuss these safety concerns with their Practicum Instructor immediately. If, after gathering information to realistically assess the situation and to learn how to provide appropriate protection, the student still

does not feel safe in order to carry out assignments, they are encouraged to renegotiate those assignments with the help of the Practicum Instructor. When appropriate, they should also consult the Faculty Liaison for assistance. Students will be required to complete a safety orientation from the Practicum program before beginning practicum placement. The Practicum Education Program **requires** students and agencies to notify the Faculty Liaison when there are safety incidents that impact students in Practicum.

---

## Student Use of Automobiles

Social work practice often requires transport to facilities outside the location of the agency. Some agencies provide reimbursement for student use of their own cars and insurance coverage for that activity in carrying out an agency assignment. Some agencies have their own fleet of automobiles for which the student may qualify as a driver if they are to have assignments requiring home visits or some other trip requiring the use of an automobile. Many other agencies do not have these resources available. These issues should be clarified in the confirmation interview with the agency prior to the beginning of the practicum. Students cannot be required to transport clients in their automobiles. If students choose to transport clients, they should contact their insurance carrier to ensure adequate coverage. Otherwise, students transport clients at their own risk.

---

## Schedule

The majority of available agencies provide client services during the typical work week of Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Of utmost importance is the need for students to be in agencies when there are maximum opportunities for interaction with other professional staff to facilitate student participation in professional decision making and collaborative work.

Students may not set their own Practicum education schedule. The Practicum education calendar is provided to students and designates both start and end dates for Practicum. Students who need to begin practicum late or significantly alter their weekly schedule must get approval from their Practicum Coordinator, assigned Faculty Liaison, and Practicum Instructor. Otherwise, the weekly schedule for each practicum is established on an individual basis with the agency in which the student is placed.

Schedules are to take into account the needs of the agency, the School of Social Work, and the individual student. Students will, from time to time, extend their clock-hours beyond the hours allocated to the Practicum education placement in order to meet professional responsibilities or obtain access to special activities. **The one exception to this rule is that a maximum of 32 hours of agency orientation may be completed prior to the practicum start date. However, no client interaction should occur during this orientation period.** It is also important to note that completing over 40 hours per week in practicum placement is not recommended.

Students must learn about the agency's expectations for their practicum placement hours at the time of the initial interview with the agency.

In addition to working out schedules with Practicum Instructors, students must keep those who may need to contact them during the placement (e.g. agency personnel and appropriate faculty) informed of their whereabouts.

---

## Vacations, Holidays, Semester Breaks, and Other Absences from the Practicum

Most agencies do not operate according to the University academic calendar and client needs continue, and often escalate, at holiday times. Any student plans for leave from the agency during the semester must be approved by the Practicum Instructor, as coverage for caseloads must be arranged. If the break would be more conveniently taken at a time other than University holidays during the semester, an alternative time can be negotiated with the agency Practicum Instructor; the Faculty Liaison should be notified of this change. Students may not, however, shorten their Practicum.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, spring break, fall break, and Winter Break are observed by The University of Alabama and students are expected to be absent from the practicum on those days. In addition, students may take any holidays observed by the agency without penalty as long as the student has verified that the clock-hour requirements of Practicum are not compromised.

The Practicum Education Program expects students to negotiate all time away from Practicum during their placement. Students may choose to work during recognized University holidays in consultation with their Faculty Liaison and Practicum Instructor.

It is understood that occasional illness or other emergency may necessitate absence from the practicum placement. Students are expected to work out these arrangements with the Practicum Instructor.

If the absence is more than a few days, the Faculty Liaison should be notified. In no instance will arrangements be approved that result in a Practicum deficiency in the required total clock hours or the specified timespan.

In addition to their regularly scheduled class sessions, students may be absent from the practicum in order to register and to be present at a final examination class session, which is often scheduled (by the University) at a time different from the regularly scheduled class time.

Students are expected to inform their Practicum Instructors of these dates as soon as possible and to make appropriate plans for their professional responsibilities. Occasionally, a class instructor will make special plans for an activity that is not on a regularly scheduled class day; in that case, the student and Practicum Instructor must assess whether the student can be absent from the practicum placement at that time, and appropriate plans must be made by the student for professional attention to agency responsibilities.

Student attendance at assigned instructional activities (classroom and Practicum education) is expected, in accordance with University policy. No systematic exception to this general University policy can be made. Therefore, any permission for attendance at a non-assigned activity (i.e., attendance at committee meetings, professional conferences, experiential learning opportunities, etc.) must be obtained from the classroom instructor(s) and/or Practicum Instructor whose class(es) and/or Practicum work would be missed to attend other activities, as based on their judgment relative to the educational value of both the classroom and the Practicum education activities.

---

## Inclement Weather

While the University makes decisions about the cancellation of classes on campus, such decisions may not impact the business operations of a student's practicum placement. It is the responsibility of the individual student to monitor weather conditions and to determine whether they are able to travel safely

to the practicum placement location or leave the placement site early to return home safely, unless stated otherwise by a Practicum Coordinator. Students should take necessary precautions to ensure their own personal safety whether the placement site is local or in another geographic location. In any event, all practicum hours missed due to inclement weather must be made up before the end of the semester. If a student has a concern about completing Practicum hours due to inclement weather, they should contact the Practicum office.

To see the University of Alabama's Inclement Weather policies and procedures, please visit:

<https://ready.ua.edu/severe-weather-guidelines/>

---

## Conferences, Trainings, and Webinars

Students are expected to attend orientation training if the agency provides this type of activity. Students can request to attend orientation training before the first day of placement. This request needs to be made in writing to the Practicum office, specifying dates in attendance and hours to be completed. The Practicum office will allow up to one week of orientation hours (32) before placement to count toward Practicum hour requirements. Orientation and training hours during Practicum may exceed 32 hours. Students must refrain from client contact prior to the first day of Practicum. Practicum education placement orientation does not constitute an automatic excused absence from other classes. Students should consult with their instructors if orientations conflict with other classes.

Students may be asked to participate in other trainings, conferences, and webinars. In order for this type of activity to count toward practicum hours, the student must get prior approval from both their Practicum Instructor and their Faculty Liaison. The Practicum Education Program will allow up to 32 hours of conferences and trainings and only 20 of those hours can be webinars or other virtual training opportunities, if such activities are approved prior by the Practicum Instructor. Students should maintain documentation of conferences, training, and webinars (e.g., completion certificates for webinars) and attach them to student logs. Student logs must contain in-depth explanation and synthesis of activity with direct correlation to the practice of Social Work with corresponding time frames. Student logs are not to be completed using any AI tools to explain that aforementioned work. If this is suspected, the student will be referred internally to the Academic and Professional Assessment Review and externally to the University's Academic Misconduct Review. Please note that the educational activities must directly relate to your practicum placement, as noted in your learning contract.

---

## Counting Travel Hours for Practicum

Students cannot count travel time from home to agency or from agency to home as Practicum education hours. Students can count travel time that the agency requires (e.g., traveling to and from the agency to complete home visits or attend meetings). Counting travel hours inappropriately is considered academic misconduct and will be reported to the academic misconduct monitor, per University policy.

---

## On-Call Hours for practicum placement

Some agencies will require students to rotate being on-call for the agency. If you are in an agency that requires on-call, you can only count the hours that you are actively working with the client. In addition, you must be supervised while you are on-call.

---

## Students on Agency Stipends

Some of the practicum placement policies (especially those related to vacation and other leave time) may be altered for students who are receiving a stipend from the agency. Occasionally these stipends require additional time commitments. Please contact your designated Practicum Coordinator if you need to alter your Practicum schedule based on stipend requirements.

---

## Policy Conflicts

Should conflicts arise between agency and School of Social Work practicum placement policies, the Practicum Instructor and/or the student should immediately notify the Faculty Liaison who will endeavor to work out a solution that is satisfactory to both the agency and the School. No alternative policy may be established which conflicts with the Agency Affiliation Agreement established between the University and the agency.

---

## Variable Hours Practicum Education Placements

Students may request an extended period of time to complete practicum education requirements, which would require them to register and complete two variable credit courses. This request must be made to your assigned Practicum Education Coordinator and indicated in SWIS. The placement must be consistent with the standards of CSWE, the School of Social Work, and The University of Alabama. BSW students should reach out to their Practicum Coordinator regarding extended placement.

Variable hour placements require the same total number of clock hours as any regular placement (450 BSW and 500 MSW). Students must be committed to completing practicum over two consecutive semesters. Practicum education hours should be accomplished during what are considered traditional working days and hours (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.). This does not imply that students can fulfill the hour requirements by engaging in non-social work activities at night or on weekends. If hours are completed at night or on the weekend, the activities must be such as to meet course objectives and under the supervision of a professional staff member.

A minimum of 16 hours per week is required for **all** students in Practicum education, regardless of cohort. Students are required to be in the Practicum for a minimum of four hours per day to meet this requirement. If students are in their practicum placement fewer than 16 hours in any week, they are not officially considered in Practicum and must not count those hours. Students cannot count any hours fewer than 16 in any given week except the first week of their practicum placement.

---

## Alternative Hours

**The Practicum Education Program does not match students with agencies on the variable of alternative hours.**

A waiver to propose alternative hours is available for limited circumstances dependent upon agreement of the Practicum agency and their ability to meet learning objectives. Of primary importance is the ability of the agency to meet the learning objectives during the proposed alternative hours. Waiver applications

are only available once a student has interviewed with an agency and discussed alternative hours. Waiver applications must include information on how the learning objectives will be met, the proposed work-week schedule, supervision, and agency signatures indicating agency approval of alternative hours. Waiver applications should only be submitted if the alternative hours will be reoccurring weekly.

### **For BSW Students Only: Extended Placements**

Students who have been approved for an extended placement will receive a grade of Incomplete until they have completed the required hours for practicum. For complete information regarding Incomplete Grades please refer to the Undergraduate or Graduate Catalog. It is expected that BSW students will complete their practicum requirements the following semester. Please note that the incomplete impacts a student's GPA until it is removed. Grades of "I" must be removed within 12 months of the end of the term in which they were awarded but prior to the student's graduation or the "I" will be changed to "F". In addition, the incomplete is calculated as an "F" which can impact students who are receiving scholarships. Having an Incomplete can also impact a student's financial aid. Students need to anticipate these issues and plan accordingly.

BSW students who commit to the variable hour placement option will register for SW 491(6 credit hours) and SW 492 (3 credit hours). Students are required to complete 300 practicum hours during SW 491- and 150-hours during SW 492. The hours completed must total 450 within the parameters stated above.

### **For MSW Students Only: Spring Placements**

Students who commit to the variable hour placement option will register for SW 595/ SW –599 A depending on their curriculum plan, 4.5 credit hours. This term runs from the first day of spring semester until summer I begins. Students are required to complete 300 - 350 practicum placement hours during this time frame. Any additional hours over 350 will not count. Students will register for SW 596/ SW-599 B depending on their curriculum plan for the summer semester. Students are required to complete 150-200 hours during the summer semester. The hours completed must total 500 within the parameters stated above. It is important to note that students will receive a grade of Incomplete at the conclusion of the spring semester until the summer semester begins. See below for information regarding Incompletes.

---

## **Consecutive Semester Practicum Policy**

Students are required to complete their practicum placement in the same agency over two consecutive semesters depending on their program of study (i.e. Fall/Spring placement or Spring/Summer placement.). The Practicum Program is committed to collaborating with students to secure an initial educationally sound placement. If you are unable to complete the second consecutive course of your practicum placement in the following semester as described above, know this will delay your program of study and graduation date.

You will need to follow the steps as outlined:

1. Contact your Practicum Coordinator as soon as possible to discuss next steps.
2. Next, contact your student services coordinator / advisor regarding your program of study. Remember that you are responsible for ensuring your registration is accurate.
3. With guidance from your Practicum Coordinator, you will need to let your agency know that you are unable to complete the placement the next term. If your agency is able to accommodate the break in placement, you will need to discuss a plan with them regarding how to restart your

placement during the next semester. Please then share the outcome of this conversation with your Practicum Coordinator in writing, if they were not included in the meeting.

4. You will need to terminate appropriately with your agency once you have made arrangements for next steps.
5. You will be responsible for securing a placement to complete your second variable practicum education course / remaining practicum hours if you cannot remain in your current placement. Please contact your Practicum Coordinator to initiate this step.
6. Failure to follow the steps outlined in this policy will result in a practicum staffing.

---

## **“I” and “N” grades**

All “I” and “N” grades must be removed within the first four weeks of the next term of enrollment if the overall GPA drops below a 3.0 as a result of the “I” or “N” grade(s).

Conditionally admitted students who fail to bring their overall GPA up to a 3.0 or better by removing the "I" or "N" within the four weeks will earn Academic Suspension (dismissal) from the Graduate School.

Graduate Students with good academic standing who fail to bring their overall GPA back up to 3.0 or better by removing the "I" and "N" grade(s) within the four weeks will earn Academic Warning.

---

## **Student Continuation in the Agency and/or with Clients of the Agency after the End of the Placement**

Occasionally, agencies seek to employ a student with whom they have worked in the practicum placement. Should that situation arise while the student is still in practicum placement, the student and the Practicum Instructor must bring it to the attention of the School of Social Work by discussing the arrangements with the Faculty Liaison. In such instances, the Faculty Liaison will assure that the necessary safeguards are in place to protect the integrity of the learning experience of the student.

Should the point of employment be after the termination of the practicum, no special arrangements are needed.

Following the end of a student’s practicum placement, it is strongly recommended that the student not continue to provide professional service in the agency as a volunteer.

Continuation of service to clients of the agency after the completion of the practicum, unless specifically requested to do so by the agency, will be considered a breach of professional social work practice.

# Evaluation and Corrective Action

---

## Practicum Placement Performance Evaluation

Students enrolled in all practicum education courses will be given both a midterm grade and a final grade. Grades will be recommended by the Practicum Instructor and will be issued by the Faculty Liaison. For the midterm evaluation, Practicum Instructors, students, and Faculty Liaisons will make contact to evaluate the student's practicum performance. If the student is performing in a satisfactory way, the Practicum Instructor will complete the midterm grade on the learning contract and will provide feedback to the Faculty Liaison. If the student is performing in a marginal or unsatisfactory way at midterms, a practicum staffing and corrective action plan should be initiated (refer to Handling Difficulties in Practicum policy).

---

## Practicum Instructor Evaluation

At the end of each semester, an automatic email will be sent to students through IPT. This email will include a survey designed to evaluate their practicum instructor. The feedback collected will help ensure the quality of instruction and uphold social work competencies.

---

## Practicum Education Grade

All learning competencies will be graded on a point scale, but the learning contract as a whole, is graded on a Pass/Fail scale. Whenever there is a rating of 1 or 2 at midterm, the student, the student, Practicum Instructor, and Faculty Liaison should modify the learning contract to promote student improvement; whenever there is an "NO" (No Opportunity, formerly a 9) at midterm, plans should be made to ensure there will be an opportunity for the student to exhibit the behavior before the conclusion of the practicum education placement. There must be no "NOs" at the final. A student who receives a 1 or 2 at final for any competency supported activity does not pass this practicum education class.

---

## Student-Initiated Review Process

Students who experience academic difficulty may request a review of their academic situation. This review will be held with the student, the faculty advisor, the Practicum Coordinator and the program chair. The purpose of the review is to explore alternatives that the student may have to resolve the difficulty. If an exception to the School of Social Work or University policy is requested, the review will provide information needed by the program chair in making a recommendation to the Dean. It is expected that such a review will be initiated only after the student has attempted to work through the difficulty in consultation with the academic advisor.

Students may initiate a practicum staffing based on major changes in life circumstances. However, practicum placement is an academic course, and acceptance of an internship constitutes a commitment to the agency. Requests for practicum placement termination or substantive changes that relate to job offers or job changes must be requested utilizing the following form. [Click here](#). These requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Students must acknowledge that this may affect their practicum timelines and may affect their graduation dates. Students may not terminate a practicum placement

without initiating a practicum staffing and following the practicum staffing procedures as set forth herein as these partnerships are governed by affiliation agreements.

---

## Handling Learning Difficulties in the Practicum

At the earliest indication of difficulties in practicum, the Practicum Instructor and student are expected to discuss the matter. The difficulties may be identified by the student, the Practicum Instructor, or both. If the difficulties are unable to be resolved in a timely fashion, the Practicum Instructor or the student may consult the Faculty Liaison. If the Faculty Liaison's involvement still does not resolve the difficulties, the Practicum Coordinator is contacted, and a practicum staffing will be called pursuant to the procedures set forth herein. In some cases, the Director of OEPCP is contacted. The Faculty Liaison, Practicum Instructor, Director of OEPCP, and Practicum Coordinator each have the authority to temporarily suspend the practicum until a Practicum staffing is convened and an outcome determined. The Director of OEPCP Program or Practicum Coordinator will officially notify the student of the suspension as soon as practical and provide the date of the practicum staffing.

## Reasons for a Practicum Staffing Initiated by Practicum Coordinator

Some difficulties practicum may necessitate a practicum staffing. The practicum staffing is designed to resolve problems and reach appropriate outcomes in the best interest of all involved parties. Below are some reasons which may prompt consideration of a practicum staffing.

- **Student is not adequately prepared for practicum.** It is assumed that the student has acquired the competencies expected for participation in the work-world (e.g., arriving on time, managing oneself schedule and communicating it to others as appropriate, presenting and conducting one's self in a professional manner—including dress and other aspects of self- presentation as well as engaging in appropriate interpersonal interactions). In addition, for the second-year MSW/ Advanced Standing practicum placement, it is expected that the student has acquired the necessary knowledge for “entry level” professional practice (reflected in objectives for BSW curriculum and first-year curriculum of MSW program) prior to the beginning of the second-year practicum placement. A practicum staffing may be called for if there is reason to believe that the student is not adequately prepared for the practicum experience.
- **Student fails to meet the expected standards for ethical professional practice.** Students are expected to demonstrate professional and ethical conduct, and to adhere to the practicum agency's policies and procedures, as long as said policies and procedures are not in conflict with the NASW Code of Ethics. The NASW Code of Ethics can be accessed at <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>, and delineates the expected standards for professional and ethical conduct. A salient issue for students during the practicum is that of confidentiality.
- **Student health condition or impairment.** In the event the student experiences a health condition or other impairment which affects his or her ability to participate in the practicum placement, a practicum staffing should be prompted.
- **Agency is unable to provide an appropriate educational opportunity.** For a variety of reasons, the student, Practicum Instructor, Faculty Liaison, Practicum Coordinator, and/or Director of Experiential Programs may question whether the agency is able to provide the expected learning experiences and/or appropriate supervision, or to meet any of the expectations identified in the

Affiliation Agreement between the agency and the University. A practicum staffing should be called in the event of any such concerns.

- **Agency requests termination of placement.** The agency maintains the right to terminate the practicum placement pursuant to the terms of the affiliation agreement. Upon notification of termination by the agency, the Director of OEPCP or Practicum Coordinator will convene a Practicum staffing.

---

## Practicum Staffing Procedure.

A typical practicum staffing will include one or more meetings between the practicum coordinator, practicum instructor, faculty liaison, and student. The Practicum Coordinator will determine if the Director of OEPCP should be invited to participate. The practicum staffing is designed to solve problems and determine appropriate outcomes. The Practicum Coordinator will convene the practicum staffing and facilitate open and constructive communication among all parties. Following the practicum staffing, the Practicum Coordinator will consider the information presented by all parties during the practicum staffing will make a decision as to the appropriate resolution. Paragraphs 1 – 6 below include some potential outcomes, although the Director of OEPCP and/or Practicum Coordinator may impose an outcome not set forth herein if he or she determines such outcome is in the best interest of the parties.

The Coordinator will develop a written summary of the issues presented during the practicum staffing and the decisions reached. If a corrective action plan is determined, a copy of that plan will be distributed to the necessary parties. The Practicum Coordinator will oversee implementation of decisions made at

## Possible Outcomes

- **No change.** In some cases, a practicum staffing results in no change to the practicum placement, and the student will be expected to return to his or her position as of the date of reinstatement as determined by the Director of OEPCP and/or Practicum Coordinator.
- **Voluntary Student Suspension of Placement.** A student may decide that it is in his or her best interest to suspend the placement. This outcome will require a timeline from student including date of reinstatement that must be approved by the Practicum Education Program.
- **Corrective Action Plan.** A Corrective Action Plan (CAP) is created by the Director of OEPCP and/or Practicum Coordinator when a practicum staffing concludes that the student is not satisfactorily meeting competencies in practicum. The CAP will be used to (a) highlight the specific competencies not being performed; (b) identify specific tasks that will need to be completed in order to adequately improve the competency(s); (c) provide a target date for reevaluation; (d) outline the responsibilities of the student, practicum instructor, and faculty liaison; and (e) provide other information that may be deemed necessary to a student in successfully completing the practicum placement. A student's inability to satisfactorily complete the CAP requirements, as determined in the discretion of the assigned professional social work supervisor, and/or Practicum Coordinator, Director of OEPCP will result in an "F" for practicum.
- **Termination of current practicum placement and change of practicum placement.** In some cases, a practicum staffing may reveal that the student's continued participation in the internship would not be in the best interest of the parties, or a practicum agency may decide to terminate a student's participation in the internship. If an initial internship is terminated prior to completion,

the Practicum Coordinator will, in most cases, work to assign the student to a second practicum placement. Assignment to a second internship is contingent on disclosure of the reasons for the termination of the initial placement and the sharing of the last Practicum evaluation form to the new potential practicum instructor/agency. Assignment to a second placement is contingent on the availability of placements. Students should be aware that there could be a potential delay in finding a suitable placement.

- If a student's initial internship is terminated based on unsatisfactory performance related to educational competencies, professional behavior, misconduct, or other behavior that does not coincide with the standards, values, and expectations of the practicum agency, the Practicum Coordinator will not work to assign the student to a second placement setting, until the student has successfully completed a corrective action plan. This plan will be created by the Practicum Coordinator in consult with the Director of OEPCP. This WILL delay the reentry into the practicum experience and will impact the graduation timeline.
- If the student is assigned to a new internship following a practicum staffing, the student will normally be required to complete the full number of hours required for the course during his or her time in the new internship. In exceptional circumstances the Practicum Coordinator may negotiate with the student to determine "hours credited" from the first internship. In either case, the student will not need to re-register for the course. If the student is terminated from a second internship, the student will receive an "F" for practicum, and the practicum office will refer the student for an Academic and Professional Assessment Review (APAR).
- If the student disagrees with the practicum staffing outcomes reached pursuant to outcomes above, the student may make use of the student-Initiated Review Process or the University-wide Academic Grievance Policy.

---

## **Request for an Academic and Professional Assessment Review (APAR) to Program Chair.**

If, following the completion of the practicum staffing, Practicum Coordinator and the Director of OEPCP has reasonable belief that the student has engaged in possible ethical violations and/or impairment serious enough to interfere with the student's practice effectiveness, the Practicum Coordinator will refer the student to the chair of the student's degree program for Academic and Professional Assessment Review (APAR). In this case, decisions about the student's continuation in the practicum education course and the program will be made through this process.

The Director of OEPCP and/or Practicum Coordinator may also refer the student for an APAR. if the student does not adhere to terms of a CAP developed as the result of a practicum staffing, or if the student does not meet practicum expectations in the second practicum placement, as determined by a practicum staffing in the second practicum placement.

# BSW Practicum Guide

---

Link for forms, learning contracts, and syllabi that correspond with this section.

## BSW Practicum Education FAQs

All practicum information will be communicated via email using the crimson.ua.edu address. In addition, the Practicum Office uses database systems for the application process (SWIS) and interactive practicum forms (IPT). You are responsible for all practicum information sent to these locations.

---

### What is a practicum placement?

A practicum placement provides students the opportunity to integrate the knowledge, skills, and values learned in the classroom, setting with the practical experiences that are provided at the agency.

Practicum is one name we use for the required course SW 490 and SW 491 and SW 492. It is important for students to understand that practicum is a class and should be treated as such.

In addition, students need to prepare for the incidental cost(s) of this course. Possible costs outside of tuition include travel (gas and mileage); fingerprinting and background checks; and drug screens, as well as vaccinations and health screenings.

---

### How do I complete a practicum placement?

BSW student's complete practicum after they are accepted into the professional program and pass the SW 444 Leadership and Professional Development course earning a grade of C- or higher. A student will complete a total of 450 hours for placement. Students can request to complete practicum during their spring or summer semester, and eligibility is determined by the Practicum Office and the student's academic advisor.

---

### What is the practicum placement process?

BSW students are required to submit an application for practicum placement to start the practicum placement process. More information about this will be provided to you during practicum information Sessions and the practicum Preparatory course SW 444. You will be able to review important application information in Blackboard.

Student applications and resumes are reviewed. The Practicum Coordinator will match students with practicum agencies based on the information provided in their application, geographic location, area of practice preference, practicum placement availability, and in some cases, faculty recommendations.

Placements to specific agencies cannot always be guaranteed as agencies and staffing are ever changing.

Once the student is slotted for an agency, the agency is sent the student's application and resume, and the student is also sent an e-mail requesting a confirmation interview. **It is the student's responsibility to contact the agency to schedule the confirmation interview within 72 hours of receiving notice. The agencies may not respond during that time frame. Please reach back out to the Practicum Coordinator**

**if two weeks have passed without contact.** The confirmation interview does not guarantee a student a practicum placement slot. The student must interview and be accepted by the agency. Students should treat this process like a job interview. Please dress professionally for the interview. The student has up to two opportunities to secure an agency. If a student denies one agency or if one agency denies a student based on comportment issues, a practicum staffing will be held to assess student practicum readiness.

---

## **Can I complete practicum placement at my current place of employment?**

Students who are currently employed at a human service agency can request an employment-based practicum placement. This request needs to be submitted well in advance and requires the approval of the designated Practicum Coordinator and/or Director of OEPCP. If approved, this option is recommended for **ONLY** one academic year. The requirements for an employment-based practicum placement are: the agency and MSW Practicum Instructor must be approved by the Practicum Education Office; the agency must have an MSW who has two years post degree experience to supervise; the BSW Practicum Instructor cannot be the student's direct supervisor; the practicum learning experiences for the student must be drawn from a unit of the agency different from the area where the student functions as an employee; and the student's employment hours must be clearly defined and separate from the practicum learning placement hours.

There is an Alternative Hours Waiver application option that students may request once a placement has been confirmed. Please see our Extended practicum education placements policy for more information.

---

## **Can my placement be arranged for evening and/or weekend hours?**

The Practicum Education Program cannot guarantee practicum placements on either weekend or evening hours as most agencies do not have available MSW supervision after 5:00 p.m. Students need to plan to be available for practicum placement during normal Practicum work site business hours. If you are working full time you should begin planning well in advance to balance your work, class, and personal commitments.

In addition, students need to be in placement during normal agency business hours for a minimum of 16 hours per week during times when their Practicum Instructor is also on duty and available to the student. These conditions do not usually allow students to do the entire placement during evenings or weekends.

Can my practicum placement be located where I am living?

The Practicum Office places main campus BSW students in Tuscaloosa or surrounding counties within a 60- mile radius. BSW and MSW distance learners will be within a 60-mile radius of your residency.

Resources are often dependent upon the available agencies within the designated communities.

---

## **Can students set up their own practicum placement?**

Students within the State of Alabama should not contact any agency to set up or inquire about practicum placements. The office has an internal software containing approved agencies that meet CSWE requirements. This list is ever evolving and changing. Each year, the practicum coordinator adds new agencies to the existing list. For students located outside the state of Alabama, the Practicum Education Team will provide further information regarding the completion of the Placement Exploration Tool (PET

Forms). This form is designed for students and the Practicum Education Team to work collaboratively through the placement process to identify potential placement sites.

---

## **I need to work while enrolled in School. How much time should I reserve for Practicum work each term?**

The practicum placement is 450 hours for BSWs and 500 for MSWs. Students must be prepared to meet these requirements. The Practicum Team will attempt to work with students to complement their work requirements, but, in no way will the educational objectives of the practicum experience be compromised. Students can apply for an extended placement which allows the student to extend the practicum through the consecutive semester. However, some agencies do not allow extended placements which may limit placement options.

MSW practicum placements require 500 hours for each placement. The hours spent in practicum each week will depend on your program of study. Advanced Standing MSW cohort students complete a block placement of 32-40 hours per week in practicum during the spring semester. Students can apply for two variable credit courses (4.5 hours each) which allows them to complete their practicum placement over the spring and summer semesters by completing fewer practicum hours each week. Two-year MSW cohort students complete 20 hours per week of practicum during their placements.

---

## **Can I be placed in two different agencies?**

Students will be placed in one agency for the duration of the practicum placement course. Please refer to the section Handling Difficulties in Practicum to view the process in the event of placement disruptions.

---

## **What agencies offer stipends to students?**

While the Practicum Education Program strongly encourages agencies to offer stipend opportunities, the agencies that do so vary and the decision is entirely up to the agency. Stipend amounts also vary but are usually quite small and limited.

Sometimes agencies offer stipends depending upon the amount of time the student can give to the agency, or to make the placement more competitive. Agencies may receive grants that allow the agency to give the student a small amount of funds. There are some specialized grants such as the IV-E child welfare grant and the juvenile justice grant that have specific stipulations. The DC and International Practicum programs assess for financial need in the application process and standardly offer assistance to participants when assistance is available. Students can discuss stipend availability at their placement interviews or with the Practicum Education Program.

---

## **Do students need to have a car?**

Students are responsible for securing transportation to their practicum placements regardless of location. As there is limited public transportation in many areas students must have access to transportation to reach their practicum placements. It is to the student's advantage to have a personal vehicle. Many of our local communities are small and have few resources for practicum placements;

therefore, not having a personal vehicle will severely limit the placement options. Students can indicate transportation needs on the practicum application.

Many practicum placements offer services that are community-based, and the majority of practicum sites require the use of a vehicle for practicum work. This means that many placements require students to have a car to perform practicum-related tasks such as transporting clients, community outreach, home visits, community work, attending meetings, etc. When using a personal vehicle for required educational training that is authorized by the University, the student's personal automobile liability insurance is considered primary

Agencies are expected to reimburse students for mileage incurred when conducting agency business (not travel between the agency and the student's residence). However, students should inquire about this policy during the interview.

---

## **Do students need insurance?**

The University of Alabama maintains program(s) of self-insurance that provide liability coverage to students while they are acting in the line and scope of their approved practicum placements. Coverage is limited to the terms, conditions and limits of the program(s) of self-insurance. It is recommended that students also carry an automobile insurance policy if they will be using their vehicle to carry out agency assignments (see above).

---

## **Can I take other courses with practicum placement?**

The Practicum course is a 9-hour credit course and practicum seminar is a 3-hour course for BSW Students. The two courses together offer a full course schedule. In order to fully participate in Practicum, students are encouraged to limit registration of other courses to a maximum of 15 hours if possible. Students often take SW 420 Research as a co-curricular course. Students seeking to take above 15 hours should consult with their advisor and Practicum Coordinator.

The MSW first year practicum courses are taken over the course of the fall semester and the spring semester. The first course, SW-590 is a 3-hour course paired with the integrative practicum seminar course, SW-534, that is a 1-hour course. The second course is SW-591, and it is a 5-hour course taken in the spring along with the second integrative practicum seminar course, SW-535, which is 1-credit hour. Students in the second year of the two-year program again take the practicum course over two semesters: SW-595, a 3-hour course, in the fall and SW-596, a 6-hour course, in the spring. For both the first and second-year students, you must earn a total of 200 hours in the fall semester by earning 16 to 20 hours per week in the placement in the fall and then you must earn 300 hours in the spring semester by earning 20 hours per week in the placement in the spring.

Students in the two-year program do take other social work courses during their time in practicum. You can follow the traditional, 60-hour curriculum or you can select to be in the three-year part-time plan or four-year part-time plan. The practicum education courses occur on the same fall and spring timeline for each plan; however, students in the three-year part-time plan complete their practicum courses in the second and third years of the program while students in the four-year part-time plan complete their practicum courses in the second and fourth years of the program. For students in the two-year program, the Washington, D.C. and International practicum placements are an option. Students in either program will complete their practicum course during the spring semester only and will select the SW-595, 9-hour

course. There are curriculum plans specific to these placements that can be developed along with the student's assigned advisor.

For students in the Advanced Standing MSW program, you will enter practicum in the spring semester of your program. Students can select to complete the 9-hour SW-595 practicum course which requires them to complete all 500 hours during the spring semester. They can also select to take the two, 4.5-hour practicum courses which requires students to be in practicum or a minimum of 16 hours per week over the course of the spring and summer semesters. Students will register for SW-595, 4.5-hours for the spring and SW-596, 4.5 hours for the summer.

---

## Applying for BSW practicum placement

- Students applying for practicum must have completed the prerequisites for the practicum in which they are applying. Students enrolled in SW 444 will receive Practicum application information during the course.
- BSW students must complete a background check during SW 444, before they enter their practicum placement in. Students must have a letter of suitability on file to begin practicum.
- BSW students must complete a SWIS practicum application during SW 444. Applications are available during designated time frames at the following link (to SWIS):  
[https://ssb.ua.edu/pls/APEX\\_PROD/f?p=221](https://ssb.ua.edu/pls/APEX_PROD/f?p=221)
- All forms associated with application must be completed, signed, and uploaded in order for application to be considered complete.
- BSW students will be assigned a practicum placement during the spring semester prior to fall placement.
- The BSW Practicum Coordinator will initiate a placement meeting in the spring using a holistic perspective.
- Students may **not** engage in direct contact (by telephone or in person) with agencies or practicum instructors PRIOR to being assigned to an agency.
- For all students in placement, a “goodness of fit” is extremely important between the student and the agency. In the event that an agency interview raises serious questions from either the student's or agency's perspective, the Practicum Coordinator should be notified to assist with the process before declining a practicum placement.
- The Practicum Education Program will provide instructions for contacting the assigned agency. Students must make an initial contact with the agency within 72 hours. Students must attend a confirmation interview with the Practicum Instructor in the agency. Students are allowed to turn down no more than one assigned placement. If more than one agency turns down a student for placement, the student will be referred for practicum staffing to determine readiness for practicum. The practicum staffing will include both the Practicum Coordinator and the respective program chair, as well as the student. It is important to note that in order to turn down an agency, the student **MUST** attend the confirmation interview first.

**IMPORTANT: STUDENTS MUST HAVE A LETTER OF SUITABILITY FROM THEIR BACKGROUND CHECK BEFORE ENTERING PRACTICUM. FAILURE TO HAVE THIS ON FILE WILL DELAY A STUDENT'S ENTRY INTO PRACTICUM. THIS IS A SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK POLICY.**

---

## Summary of Practicum Instructor Responsibilities

1. Students will be assigned to BSW Practicum agencies. You will be sent a copy of the student's educational goals and a resume by the Practicum Education Program. The student will be instructed to contact you regarding a confirmation interview to determine the appropriateness of the placement.
2. Depending on the outcome of the interview, you may accept or not accept the student for placement. It is appropriate to let the student know of the outcome at the time of the interview, or if you prefer, contact the Practicum Coordinator who will convey your decision to the student. At the time of the interview, it is helpful to discuss hour expectations, times at which the student must be in practicum, etc., in order to assess the feasibility of the placement. It is also helpful to determine the exact start-up date for the student to begin Practicum.
3. The Practicum Coordinator and Faculty Liaisons will work with each of you to construct possible learning tasks related to the curriculum that are appropriate for BSW students prior to the actual placement. Frequently during the confirmation interview, other areas of student interest emerge, and additional assignments are discussed. A formal learning contract should be constructed and signed off on by the Practicum Instructor, student, and Faculty Liaison by the third week of the semester. A copy of a learning contract is included at the end of each course outline, which reflects the competencies for practicum.
4. The BSW practicum placement is guided by the SW 490 course syllabus outline and the learning contract. The mid-term evaluation and final evaluation are included in the learning contract. Orientation and advanced workshops are offered to Practicum Instructors both online and face to face. You will receive ongoing information about how to access workshops. Each student will be assigned to a practicum Seminar Instructor as well as a seminar group. The students will remain with that Instructor/group for the entire BSW practicum.
5. You will be asked to complete evaluations of the student using the learning contract. Based on your overall evaluation, you will be asked to complete a mid-term grade and a final grade recommending the student's overall performance. You will recommend the grade and the Faculty Liaison will assist you in the process and ultimately grade the student. You, the student, and the Faculty Liaison will sign off on the learning contract.
6. Please call the Practicum Coordinator or your Faculty Liaison with any questions or concerns about the placement.
7. Also, at end of the semester, the Practicum Instructor and the student will be asked to complete a series of BSW Evaluation Forms which ask for an evaluation of the practicum experience. These forms are included in Appendix B.
8. Faculty Liaisons will be asked to conduct at least two visits to the placement agency during the semester. For all sites, regular contact by telephone and e-mail are essential for educational monitoring. At the beginning of each placement, Faculty Liaisons will secure the e-mail addresses of students enrolled in their practicum and their Practicum Instructors in order to communicate regularly with practicum participants.

To further ensure educational monitoring, Practicum Instructors should attend practicum education training meetings. Additionally, as Practicum Instructors generally are on campus for

these events, meetings can be arranged among the Practicum Instructors, Faculty Liaisons, and students should problems or concerns arise in a particular placement.

# MSW Practicum Guide

---

Link for forms, learning contracts, and syllabi that correspond with this section.

## BSW & MSW Practicum Education FAQs

All Practicum Information will be communicated via email using the crimson.ua.edu address. In addition, the Practicum Office uses database systems for the application process (SWIS) and interactive Practicum forms (IPT). You are responsible for all Practicum information sent to these locations.

---

### What is practicum placement?

Practicum placement provides students the opportunity to integrate the knowledge, skills, and values learned in the classroom setting with the practical experiences that are provided at the agency. Practicum placement is one name we use for the required course SW 490, SW 590 Practicum Education. It is important for students to understand that Practicum is a class and should be treated as such.

In addition, students need to prepare for the incidental cost(s) of this course. Possible costs outside of tuition include travel (gas and mileage); fingerprinting and background checks; and drug screens, as well as vaccinations and health screenings.

---

### How do I Complete practicum placement?

BSW students complete Practicum in the fall semester after they are accepted into the professional program and pass the SW 444 Practicum Preparation course earning a grade of C- or higher. A student will complete a total of 450 hours for placement. Students can request to complete Practicum during their Spring semester.

MSW Students' curricular plans determine when they will complete practicum placement(s). Both foundation (1st-year) and concentration (2nd-year and advanced standing) students complete 500 hours of practicum during each practicum placement/course.

---

### What is the practicum placement Process?

BSW students are required to submit an application for practicum placement to start the practicum placement process. More information about this will be provided to you during Practicum Information Sessions and the Practicum Preparatory course SW 444. You will be able review important application information in Blackboard. MSW students are required to submit an application for practicum placement to start the placement process as well.

The Practicum Education Team will meet spring semester to make placement decisions. Student applications and resumes are reviewed. The team will match students with Practicum agencies based on prior work and internship experience, geographic location, practicum of practice preference, practicum placement availability, and in some cases, faculty recommendations.

Once the student is slotted for an agency, the agency is sent the student's application and resume and the student is also sent an e-mail requesting a confirmation interview. It is the student's responsibility to contact the agency to schedule the confirmation interview within 72 hours of receiving notice. The

confirmation interview does not guarantee a student a practicum placement slot. The student must interview and be accepted by the agency. Students should treat this process like a job interview. The student has up to two opportunities to secure an agency. If a student denies one agency or if one agency denies a student based on comportment issues, a Practicum staffing will be held to assess student Practicum readiness.

---

### **Can I complete practicum placement at my current place of employment?**

Students who are currently employed at a human service agency can request an employment practicum placement. This request needs to be submitted well in advance and requires the approval of the Director of OEPCP and the designated Practicum Coordinator. If approved, this option is recommended for ONLY one academic year. The requirements for an Employment-Based practicum placement are: the agency and MSW Practicum Instructor must be approved by the Practicum Education Office; the agency must have an MSW who has two years post degree experience to supervise; the Practicum Instructor cannot be the student's direct supervisor; the practicum learning experiences for the student must be drawn from a unit of the agency different from the area where the student functions as an employee; and the student's employment hours must be clearly defined and separate from the practicum learning placement hours.

There is an Alternative Hours Waiver application option that students may request once a placement has been confirmed. Please see our Extended Practicum Education Placements policy for more information.

---

### **Can my placement be arranged for evening and/or weekend hours?**

The Practicum Education Program cannot guarantee practicum placements on either weekend or evening hours as most agencies do not have available MSW supervision after 5:00 p.m. Students need to plan to be available for practicum placement during normal practicum work site business hours. If you are working full time, you should begin planning well in advance to balance your work, class, and personal commitments.

In addition, students need to be in placement during normal agency business hours for a minimum of 16 hours per week during times when their Practicum Instructor is also on duty and available to the student. These conditions do not usually allow students to do the entire placement during evenings or weekends.

---

### **Can my practicum placement be located where I am living?**

The Practicum Office places main campus BSW students in Tuscaloosa or surrounding counties within a 60- mile radius. BSW and MSW distance learners will be within a 60-mile radius of your residency.

Resources are often dependent upon the available agencies within the designated communities.

---

### **Can students set up their own practicum placement?**

Students within the State of Alabama should not contact any agency to set up or inquire about practicum placements. The Office has an internal software containing approved agencies that meet CSWE requirements. This list is ever evolving and changing. Each year the Practicum Coordinator makes new

site visits and adds new agencies to the existing list. For students located outside of Alabama, the Practicum Office will provide further information regarding the completion of the Placement Exploration Tool (PET Forms). This form is designed for students and the Practicum Office to work collaboratively through the placement process to identify potential placement sites.

---

## **I need to work while enrolled in School. How much time should I reserve for Practicum work each term?**

The practicum placement is 450 hours for BSWs and 500 for MSWs. Students must be prepared to meet these requirements. The Practicum Office will attempt to work with students to complement their work requirements, but, in no way will the educational objectives of the practicum experience be compromised. Students can apply for an extended placement which allows the student to extend the practicum through the spring. However, some agencies do not allow extended placements which may limit placement options.

MSW practicum placements require 500 hours for each placement. The hours spent in practicum each week will depend on your program of study. Advanced Standing MSW cohort students complete a block placement of 32-40 hour per week in practicum during the spring semester. Students can apply for two variable credit courses (4.5 hours each) which allows them to complete their practicum placement over the spring and summer semesters by completing fewer practicum hours each week. Two-year MSW cohort students complete 20 hours per week of practicum during their placements.

---

## **Can I be placed in two different agencies?**

Students will be placed in one agency for the duration of the practicum placement course. Please refer to the section Handling Difficulties in Practicum to view the process in the event of placement disruptions.

---

## **What agencies offer stipends to students?**

While the Practicum Office strongly encourages agencies to offer stipend opportunities, the agencies that do so vary and the decision is entirely up to the agency. Stipend amounts also vary but are usually quite small and limited.

Sometimes agencies offer stipends depending upon the amount of time the student can give to the agency, or to make the placement more competitive. Agencies may receive grants that allow the agency to give the student a small amount of funds. There are some specialized grants such as the IV-E child welfare grant and the juvenile justice grant that have specific stipulations. The DC and International Practicum programs assess for financial need in the application process and standardly offer assistance to participants when assistance is available. Students can discuss stipend availability at their placement interviews or with the Practicum Office.

---

## **Do students need to have a car?**

Students are responsible for securing transportation to their practicum placements regardless of location. As there is limited public transportation in many areas students must have access to

transportation to reach their practicum placements. It is to the student's advantage to have a personal vehicle. Many of our local communities are small and have few resources for practicum placements; therefore, not having a personal vehicle will severely limit the practicum placement options. Students can indicate transportation needs on the practicum application.

Many practicum placements offer services that are community-based, and the majority of practicum sites require the use of a vehicle for practicum work. This means that many practicum placements require students to have a car to perform practicum-related tasks such as transporting clients, community outreach, home visits, community work, attending meetings, etc. When using a personal vehicle for required educational training that is authorized by the University, the student's personal automobile liability insurance is considered primary.

Agencies are expected to reimburse students for mileage incurred when conducting agency business (not travel between the agency and the student's residence). However, students should inquire about this policy during the interview.

---

### **Do students need insurance?**

The University of Alabama maintains program(s) of self-insurance that provide liability coverage to students while they are acting in the line and scope of their approved practicum placements. Coverage is limited to the terms, conditions and limits of the program(s) of self-insurance. It is recommended that students also carry an automobile insurance policy if they will be using their vehicle to carry out agency assignments (see above).

---

### **Can I take other courses with practicum placement?**

The Practicum course is a 9-hour credit course and Practicum seminar is a 3 hour course for BSW Students. The two courses together offer a full course schedule. In order to fully participate in Practicum, students are encouraged to limit registration of other courses to a maximum of 15 hours if possible. Students often take SW 420 Research as a co-curricular course. Students seeking to take above 15 hours, should consult with their advisor and Practicum Coordinator.

The MSW first year practicum courses are taken over the course of the fall semester and the spring semester. The first course, SW-590 is a 3-hour course paired with the integrative practicum seminar course, SW-534, that is a 1-hour course. The second course is SW-591, and it is a 5-hour course taken in the spring along with the second integrative practicum seminar course, SW-535, which is 1-credit hour. Students in the second year of the two-year program again take the practicum course over two semesters: SW-595, a 3-hour course, in the fall and SW-596, a 6-hour course, in the spring. For both the first and second-year students, you must earn a total of 200 hours in the fall semester by earning 16 to 20 hours per week in the placement in the fall and then you must earn 300 hours in the spring semester by earning 20 hours per week in the placement in the spring.

Students in the two-year program do take other social work courses during their time in practicum. You can follow the traditional, 60-hour curriculum or you can select to be in the three-year part-time plan or four-year part-time plan. The practicum education courses occur on the same fall and spring timeline for each plan; however, students in the three-year part-time plan complete their practicum courses in the second and third years of the program while students in the four-year part-time plan complete their practicum courses in the second and fourth years of the program. For students in the two-year program,

the Washington, D.C. and International practicum placements are an option. Students in either program will complete their practicum course during the spring semester only and will select the SW-595, 9-hour course. There are curriculum plans specific to these placements that can be developed along with the student's assigned advisor.

For students in the Advanced Standing MSW program, you will enter practicum in the spring semester of your program. Students can select to complete the 9-hour SW-595 practicum course which requires them to complete all 500 hours during the spring semester. They can also select to take the two, 4.5-hour practicum courses which requires students to be in practicum or a minimum of 16 hours per week over the course of the spring and summer semesters. Students will register for SW-595, 4.5-hours for the spring and SW-596, 4.5 hours for the summer.

---

## Applying for MSW Practicum

1. Specific instructions for applying for your practicum will be explained during orientation to the MSW program. Students will also receive email communication from the Practicum Program email account (oepcp@ua.edu.) with information about applying for Practicum. Students should pay careful attention to their Crimson email accounts as the Practicum Education Program utilizes this form of communication often to share information, updates, and reminders. Students applying for practicum must have completed the prerequisites for the practicum in which they are applying. For further information on prerequisites please check the MSW Student Toolkit.
2. MSW students must complete a background check before they enter their practicum placement. Students must have a letter of suitability on file to begin Practicum.
3. MSW students must complete a practicum application in SWIS. Applications are available at the following link: [https://ssb.ua.edu/pls/APEX\\_PROD/f?p=221](https://ssb.ua.edu/pls/APEX_PROD/f?p=221). SWIS is only open at certain times throughout the year for the application process. Please watch for emails from the practicum office email account alerting you to these dates.
4. MSW students will be assigned a practicum site before they enter practicum.
5. Students in the state of Alabama may not engage in direct contact (by telephone or in person) with agencies or Practicum Instructors PRIOR to being assigned to a practicum. For students located outside the State of Alabama, the practicum program will provide a Placement Exploration Tool (PET Form) to help establish potential practicum placement sites.
6. For all students in placement, a "goodness of fit" is extremely important between the student and the agency. In the event that an agency placement interview raises serious questions from either the student's or agency's perspective, the student should contact their assigned Practicum Coordinator to discuss their concerns and make a plan for next steps.
7. The Practicum Education Program will provide instructions for contacting the assigned agency. Students must make an initial contact with the agency within 72 hours. Students must attend a confirmation interview with the Practicum Instructor in the agency. Students are allowed to turn down their initial practicum placement. If more than one agency turns down a student for practicum placement the student may not be placed without a Practicum staffing that includes both the Practicum Coordinator and the MSW Program Chair. Please note that in order to turn down an agency the student MUST attend the confirmation interview. In addition, the student should contact their assigned Practicum Coordinator before they decline agency.

**IMPORTANT: STUDENTS MUST HAVE A LETTER OF SUITABILITY FROM THEIR BACKGROUND CHECK BEFORE ENTERING PRACTICUM. FAILURE TO HAVE THIS ON FILE WILL DELAY A STUDENT'S ENTRY INTO PRACTICUM. THIS IS A SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK POLICY.**

---

## Summary of Practicum Instructor Responsibilities

1. Students will be assigned to MSW Practicum agencies. You will be sent a copy of the student's educational goals and a resume by the Practicum Education Program. The student will be instructed to contact you regarding a Confirmation Interview to determine the appropriateness of the placement.
2. Depending on the outcome of the interview, you may accept or decline the student for placement. It is appropriate to let the student know of the outcome at the time of the interview, or if you prefer, contact the Practicum Coordinator who will convey your decision to the student. At the time of the interview it is helpful to discuss hour expectations, times at which the student must be in Practicum, etc., in order to assess the feasibility of the placement. It is also helpful to determine the exact start-up date for the student to begin the practicum. The Practicum Coordinator and Faculty Liaison will work with each of you to construct possible learning tasks related to the curriculum that are appropriate for MSW students prior to the actual placement. Frequently during the confirmation interview, other areas of student interest emerge, and additional assignments are discussed. A formal learning contract should be constructed and signed off on by the Practicum Instructor, student, and Faculty Liaison by the third week of the semester. A copy of a blank learning contract is included at the end of each course outline, which reflects the competencies for Practicum.
3. Meet with student early in the semester to discuss student's learning contract for semester. This contract will define student and agency expectations for the semester and will define actual student tasks and assignments. Learning contracts must be signed by the student, the Practicum Instructor, and the Faculty Liaison. Think through the types of assignments that will facilitate the student's meeting competencies for either SW 590 (1st year) or SW 595 (2nd year and Advanced Standing), reflecting the appropriate concentration--Children, Adolescents, and Their Families (CAF) or Adults and Their Families (AF)--for SW 595 students. The Faculty Liaison will assist in this process.
4. The MSW practicum placement is guided by either the SW 590 course outline/learning contract (1st year) or SW 595 (2nd year and Advanced Standing) reflecting the appropriate concentration (CAF or AF) for SW 595 students. Midterm evaluation and final evaluations are included in the Learning Contract. Orientation and advanced workshops are offered to Practicum Instructors both online and face to face. You will receive ongoing information about how to access workshops. Each student in SW 590 and SW 591 will be assigned to a Practicum Seminar Instructor as well as a seminar group. The students will remain with that Instructor/group for the entire MSW I practicum placement.
5. You will be asked to evaluate the student using the learning contract. Based on your overall evaluation, you will be asked to complete a mid-term grade and a final grade recommending the student's overall performance. The mid-term grade is particularly important because of the student's need for performance feedback early in the practicum. Any problems, concerns, or marginal performance noted can be identified. You will recommend the grade and the Faculty

Liaison will assist you in the process and ultimately grade the student. You, the student, and the Faculty Liaison will sign off on the learning contract.

6. Please call the Practicum Coordinator or your Faculty Liaison with any questions or concerns about the placement.
7. Also, at end of the semester the Practicum Instructor and the student will be asked to complete a series of MSW Evaluation Forms which ask for an evaluation of the practicum.
8. Faculty Liaisons will be asked to conduct at least two visits to the placement agency during the placement. For sites that are geographically distant, instructors have the option of conducting these visits via telephone conference call or through a virtual platform (Zoom). For all sites, regular contact by telephone and e-mail are essential for educational monitoring. At the beginning of each placement, Faculty Liaisons will secure the e-mail addresses of students enrolled in their practicum and will construct an e-mail listserv of all foundation students and Practicum Instructors in order to communicate regularly with practicum participants.

To further ensure educational monitoring, Practicum Instructors should attend Practicum instructional training meetings. Additionally, as Practicum Instructors generally are on campus for these events, meetings can be arranged among the Practicum Instructors, Faculty Liaisons and, students, should problems or concerns arise in a particular placement.

# The University of Alabama Harassment Policy

---

## I. Statement of Policy

### a. Harassment Is Not Tolerate

The University of Alabama is committed to providing an environment for employees, students, and campus visitors that is free from illegal harassment based on genetic information, race, color, religion, national origin, sex (which includes sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression), age, disability or veteran status in admission or access to, or treatment of employment in, its programs and services. Such illegal harassment violates federal civil rights laws and University nondiscrimination policy and may lead to personal liability for the results of such behavior.

The University of Alabama is committed to providing and promoting an atmosphere in which employees can realize their maximum potential in the workplace and students can engage fully in the learning process. Toward this end, all members of the University community (including faculty, staff and students) must understand that harassment based upon one's protected status as identified above will not be tolerated, and that they are required to abide by the following policy. The University will take appropriate action to prevent, correct, and where warranted, discipline behavior that violates its Harassment Policy.

The University implements its Harassment Policy through preventive education and training and through procedures for investigating and resolving claims of harassment. Employees and students are encouraged to participate in training programs, which are offered by a variety of departments and divisions, including the Department of Human Resources. Individuals who believe they are being harassed are encouraged to report the problem to appropriate administrative officials.

Information about appropriate complaint channels and the procedures for resolution of claims of harassment follows and can also be obtained from the Deans' Offices, the Vice Presidents' Offices, the Department of Human Resources, or the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs.

---

### b. Retaliation Is Not Tolerated

The University encourages students, faculty, and staff to express freely, responsibly, and in an orderly way opinions and feelings about any problem or complaint of harassment. Retaliation against persons who oppose or complain about harassment is strictly prohibited. Retaliation is any action that has the effect of punishing a person for engaging in a legally protected activity, such as alleging harassment, making a harassment complaint, or assisting in a harassment investigation. Examples of retaliatory adverse employment actions include suspension, demotion, or termination. In addition, this policy prohibits retaliation in the form of harassment, intimidation, threats, or coercion, or in the form of any materially adverse harm that would dissuade a reasonable student or employee from filing a harassment complaint or participating in a harassment investigation.

An employee/student is protected against retaliation for his or her opposition to harassment as long as the employee/student has a reasonable and "good faith" belief that the complained of conduct is illegal, even if it turns out that the complainant was mistaken as to the legality of the conduct. It is a violation of the University's policy to retaliate against the complainant(s), respondent(s), witnesses or others involved in the review of such complaints. Any employee who retaliates against an employee or a student in violation of the law and/or the University's Harassment policy is subject to disciplinary action.

This Harassment policy shall not, however, be used to bring frivolous or malicious complaints against students, faculty or other employees. If a complaint has been made in bad faith, as demonstrated by clear and convincing evidence, disciplinary action may be taken against the person bringing the complaint.

---

## **II. Factors Considered in Determining Existence of Harassment**

### **a. Definition of Harassment**

Harassment is abusive or hostile conduct which is directed toward or inflicted upon another person because of his or her race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, or veteran's status and which, because of its severity or pervasiveness, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work or academic performance or creates a hostile or abusive work or learning environment for that individual's work, education, or participation in a University activity. Harassment is typically based on stereotyped prejudices and includes, but is not limited to, slurs, jokes, objectionable epithets, or other verbal, graphic, or physical conduct that demeans, insults, or intimidates an individual because of his or her race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, or veteran status.

---

### **b. Sexual Harassment Defined**

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of employment or academic advancement; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or academic decisions; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance as an employee or student or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or learning environment.

---

### **c. Factors Considered in Assessing Whether Harassment Exists**

In determining whether conduct constitutes prohibited harassment, the following understandings shall apply:

1. Harassment must be distinguished from behavior which, even though unpleasant or uncomfortable, is appropriate to the carrying out of instructional or supervisory responsibilities (e.g., criticism of work, corrective discipline, performance evaluation; discussion of controversial topics germane to an academic subject).
2. The totality of the circumstances must be evaluated to determine whether a particular act or course of conduct constitutes harassment, including the frequency, severity, and context of the questioned conduct and whether the conduct was physically threatening and humiliating or a mere utterance;
3. The conduct alleged to be harassment will be evaluated from the perspective of a reasonable person in a similar situation and not simply the particular sensitivity or reaction of an individual;

4. An isolated incident of hostile behavior, although offensive, usually will not be sufficient to establish a claim of illegal harassment. For example, generally, a single sexual joke, offensive epithet, or request for a date does not constitute sexual harassment; however, being subjected to such jokes, epithets or requests repeatedly may constitute sexual harassment. However, administrators and supervisors should take corrective action when such isolated incidents occur, in order to ensure that repetition of that or similar conduct does not rise to the level of illegal harassment; and
  5. Although repeated incidents of hostile conduct generally create a stronger claim of harassment, a serious incident, even if isolated, may be sufficient.
- 

#### **d. Academic Freedom and Harassment**

In cases of alleged illegal harassment, the protections of the First Amendment must be considered if issues of speech or artistic expression are involved. Free speech rights apply in the classroom and in all other education programs and activities of public institutions, and First Amendment rights apply to the speech of students and teachers. Great care must be taken not to inhibit open discussion, academic debate, and expression of personal opinion, particularly in the classroom. Nonetheless, speech or conduct of a harassing, sexual or hostile nature ;which occurs in the context of educational instruction may exceed the protections of academic freedom and constitute prohibited harassment if it meets the definition of harassment noted above and

1. is reasonably regarded as non-professorial speech (i.e., advances a personal interest of the faculty member as opposed to furthering the learning process or legitimate objectives of the course), or
  2. lacks accepted pedagogical purpose or is not germane to the academic subject matter.
- 

### **III. Reporting of Harassment or Related Retaliation Allegations**

#### **a. Prompt Reporting Required**

Persons who believe they have been targets of harassment or related retaliation should report the incident(s) immediately to appropriate administrative officials as set forth below. Delay in reporting to these university officials makes it more difficult to investigate fairly and adequately the incident and may contribute to the repetition of offensive behavior.

---

#### **b. Confidentiality**

The University will do everything consistent with enforcement of this policy and with the law to protect the privacy of the individuals involved and to ensure that the complainant and the accused are treated fairly. Information about individual complaints and their disposition is considered confidential and will be shared only on a “need to know” basis.

---

#### **c. Reporting Channels**

The following sections identify appropriate harassment resource persons and complaint- receiving officials that students and employees should contact regarding illegal harassment and/or retaliation for complaining or participating in a complaint or investigation.

- 1. Responsibilities of Supervisory Personnel:** All members of the university community have a general responsibility to contribute in a positive way to a university environment that is free of illegal harassment. Supervisory personnel, however, have additional responsibilities. Supervisory personnel are not only responsible for educating and sensitizing employees in their units about harassment issues, but they are also directed to take all appropriate steps to prevent and stop harassment in their areas of responsibility, which may include training. Supervisory personnel who are contacted by an individual seeking to file a complaint about harassment in their unit or area of responsibility shall assist the complainant in contacting the appropriate complaint-receiving officials identified below.
- 2. Student Complaints:** Students with complaints of harassment against faculty members, graduate assistants or other student employees, and staff members in departments, schools, or colleges should contact the designated Harassment Resource Person in their department, school or college or in the department, school or college in which the alleged offender is employed. A faculty member to whom a student has come with a complaint of harassment should recommend that the student contact the designated Harassment Resource Person. The name and location of the designated Harassment Resource Person can be obtained online from the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs website or from the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs.

Students participating in internships, practicum placements, student teaching, or similar academic experiences in settings off campus should report complaints of harassment arising out of those placements to the University faculty or staff member providing supervision or to the designated Harassment Resource Person in their college or school. Students with complaints of harassment against other students should be addressed to the Student Affairs designated Harassment Resource Person(s). Students who believe for any reason that they cannot effectively communicate their concern through any of these channels may consult the University Compliance Officer in the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, or if conflicts exist with the University Compliance Officer, students may consult with the Office of the Provost.

Students who believe they are targets of sexual assault or sexual harassment may seek advice and referral from both the Women’s Resource Center and the Counseling Center. These offices keep all information confidential and neither receive formal complaints nor conduct investigations. The Counseling Center is also available to students for assistance on a wide range of issues.

- 3. Employee Complaints:** Employees should report complaints of harassment to the designated Harassment Resource Person for the college, school, or administrative unit in which they are employed or to the Department of Human Resources. Employees who believe for any reason that they cannot effectively communicate their concerns through any of these channels may consult the University Compliance Officer in the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, or if conflicts exist with the University Compliance Officer, employees may consult with the Office of the Provost.

Employees who believe they are targets of sexual assault or sexual harassment may seek advice and referral from the Women’s Resource Center. The Women’s Resource Center keeps all information confidential and neither receives formal complaints nor conducts investigations.

---

#### d. Procedures for Handling Complaints of Harassment

Individuals who believe they are targets of unlawful harassment in their working or academic environments are encouraged to respond to the alleged harasser directly, by objecting and by requesting that the unwelcome behavior stop. Individuals may also seek assistance or intervention, short of filing a complaint, from their supervisor or University complaint-receiving officials referenced in paragraphs C (2) and (3) above.

An initial discussion between the complainant and the complaint-receiving official will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law, with no formal written record. The complaint-receiving official will explain the options available and will counsel the complainant. If the complainant, after an initial meeting with the complaint-receiving official, decides to proceed, the complainant will be requested to provide a written statement describing the complaint.

Complaints of harassment will receive prompt attention. Complaints may be resolved through the informal or formal procedures described below, and appropriate action will be taken. Informal means are encouraged as the beginning point, but the choice of where to begin normally rests with the complainant. However, if the complaint-receiving official believes that the matter is sufficiently grave because it seems to be part of a persistent pattern, because of the nature of the alleged offense, or because the complainant seeks to have a sanction imposed, then the complaint-receiving official will initiate a formal procedure or take other appropriate action.

#### 1. Informal Procedures

- a. The complainant may attempt to resolve the matter directly with the alleged offender and report back to the complaint-receiving official.
- b. The complaint-receiving official may notify the alleged offender of the complaint, paying appropriate attention to the need to maintain confidentiality. The complaint-receiving official may take whatever steps short of disciplinary sanctions that they deem appropriate to effect an informal resolution acceptable to both parties.
- c. Where the alleged offender is a student, the complainant and accused may choose to participate in mediation. If a complaint is resolved informally, no record of the complaint will be entered in the alleged offender's personnel file or student records. However, the complaint-receiving official will, in the form of a confidential file memorandum, record the fact of the complaint and the resolution achieved. A copy of this memorandum will be forwarded to the University Compliance Officer in the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs where it will be retained in confidential files.

#### 2. Formal Procedures: In formal resolution procedures, the written and signed complaint will be directed to the following officials:

- a. If the complaint is against a faculty member, other instructional personnel, or staff employed in a college or school, it should be directed to the dean of the college/school.
- b. If the complaint is against a staff member in a unit other than a college or school, it should be directed to the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs.
- c. If the complaint is against a student, not acting in an instructional or other employment capacity, it should be directed to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.
- d. If the complaint is against a person outside the University (non-employee, non-student), it should be directed to the dean of the college or school if the behavior is occurring in a college or school, to the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs if the behavior is occurring

in the work environment outside an academic unit, or to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs if the complainant is a student.

- e. If conflicts or other problems exist with the dean or the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs handling the complaint, the complaint may be filed with the University Compliance Officer in the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs. If conflicts exist with the University Compliance Officer, individuals may consult with the Office of the Provost.

The officials listed directly above, or their appointed designees, will conduct a prompt and appropriate investigation, conducting whatever inquiry they deem necessary, and will arrange conferences with the complainant, the alleged offender, and any other appropriate persons. The investigation, subject to the confidentiality provision above, will afford the accused an opportunity to respond to the allegations.

Those directing investigations will make a record of the case, including a record of their decision and any sanctions imposed. Those records are to be retained for at least four years after the individual leaves the University employment. The officials conducting the inquiry shall forward to the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs (i) a copy of the complaint, (ii) the decision made regarding the complaint, and (iii) any resolution achieved, including any sanctions imposed, which will be retained in that office's confidential files. The complainant and the alleged offender will be notified whether the investigation results in the finding of a policy violation; however, that information should be treated by both parties as confidential and private. (Mandating harassment training is not to be considered a "sanction").

A complainant not satisfied with the resolution achieved by the formal procedures may discuss the matter further with the University Compliance Officer in the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs.

---

### **e. Disciplinary Sanctions**

A conclusion that harassment in violation of University policy or the law has occurred shall subject the offender to appropriate disciplinary action and may result in suspension, discharge, expulsion or dismissal. University disciplinary procedures and possible sanctions are described in the Code of Student Conduct in the Student Toolkit, the Staff Toolkit and Policy Manual, and the Faculty Toolkit. Sanctions imposed will be determined on the basis of the facts of each case and the extent of harm to the University's interests.

# Appendix A: International Practicum Placement Application

---



## International Practicum Placement Application

Full Name (as printed on passport): \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CWID: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Which Semester/Year do you plan on doing an International Placement: \_\_\_\_\_

U.S. Citizen: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If No, country issuing passport: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date on Passport: \_\_\_\_\_ Passport Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list all the countries to which you have previously traveled:

---

---

Please identify the country in which you have an interest in doing an international practicum placement:

---

---

### Screening Essay

Directions: Attach to this application a one-to-three-page essay describing your rationale for seeking international placement, your potential learning goals for the placement, and how this relates to your future professional plans.

### References

Attach two reference letters to this application. One must be or both can be from instructors/professors, and one can be from some other person familiar with your character and/or abilities. The references should address your character, your dependability, your level of adaptability, patience, responsibility, self-directedness, flexibility, initiative and self-starting abilities, along with your comfort with ambiguity and uncertainty. Both references must include contact information, in case additional information is needed.



# Appendix B: Authorization for Release of Records and Information and Acknowledgement of Risk

---

## Authorization for Release of Records and Information

TO: Practicum Placement Agency (hereinafter referred to as the Facility)

RE: \_\_\_\_\_

(Print Name of Student)

As a condition of my participation in an educational training program and with respect thereto, I hereby waive my privacy rights, including but not limited to, any rights pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g(b)(2)(B) (FERPA), and grant my permission and authorize the Board of Trustees of The University of Alabama (hereinafter referred to as the Institution) to release any and all of my educational records (as defined by FERPA) and information in its possession, including but not limited to, academic record and standing, to Facility. I further authorize the release of any information relative to my academic history to the Facility for purposes of verifying the information provided by me and determining my ability to perform my assignments in the educational training program. I also grant my permission to and authorize the Facility to release the above information to the Institution.

I further agree that this authorization will be valid throughout my educational training program. I further request that you do not disclose any information to any other person or entity without prior written authority from me to do so, unless disclosure is authorized or required by law. I understand that this authorization shall continue in force until revoked by me by providing written notice to the Institution and the Facility, except to the extent of any action(s) that has already been taken in accordance with this Authorization for Release of Records and Information.

Further, a copy or facsimile of this Authorization for Release of Records and Information may be accepted in lieu of the original.

By signing this Authorization for Release of Records and Information, I hereby indemnify and hold harmless the Institution, its members, agents, servants and employees, and the Facility and its members, agents, servants and employees (each of the foregoing being hereinafter referred to individually as the Indemnified Party) against all claims, demands, causes of action, actions, judgments or other liability including attorneys fees (other than liability solely the fault of the Indemnified Party) arising out of or in connection with this Authorization for Release of Records and Information.

I have read, or have had read to me, the above statements, and understand them as they apply to me. I hereby certify that I am eighteen (18) years of age or older, suffer under no legal disabilities preventing me from voluntarily and knowingly signing this Authorization, and that I have freely and voluntarily signed this Authorization for Release of Records and Information.

This the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Signature

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please print)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please print)

## Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risk in the Practicum Placement

This document is designed to inform you of the potential risks associated with a practicum placement. It is the School of Social Work's belief that you have a right to be informed of risks associated with this aspect of your educational and professional preparation, and that with proper knowledge and preparation, risks can be minimized.

**Liability Insurance:** Professional liability coverage is provided through The University of Alabama. A student is not required to purchase professional liability coverage; however a student is permitted to obtain professional liability insurance coverage above the University's policy. Coverage is available through the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).

**Automobile Liability Insurance:** Most practicum agencies will not allow students to transport clients. However, you may be asked to use your vehicle for making home visits or attending community meetings. It is recommended that you check with your insurance company for a clear understanding of your coverage. Ask specifically what coverage you have if something happens while transporting a client. If clients are to be transported, an agency vehicle should be used, if available.

**TB Skin Test (PPD-S):** The prevalence of TB has increased in recent years. If you anticipate a practicum setting that serves populations at risk for TB, it is recommended that you take this test prior to entering field. Some practicum sites require this test. You can be tested at the Student Health Center.

**Hepatitis B Vaccine:** Working with high-risk clients means there is a chance of being exposed to blood-borne pathogens; it is recommended that you get this vaccination. This involves a series of three injections over a six month period of time. The second injection is given one month following the first, with the third coming five months later. Please contact the Student Health Center for further questions.

**HIV-AIDS:** The risk of exposure to the HIV virus is very low in most social work practice settings. Be knowledgeable about how the virus is transmitted. If you work in a setting with HIV + persons, insist on completing the same infectious disease control training that other staff in the agency receive.

**Client Office Visits:** You may have a client in your office that becomes agitated or hostile. It is important that you discuss such matters with your field instructor early in your practicum to become informed of agency policy and recommended course of action should this occur.

**Institutional Settings:** Mental health and correctional institution settings serve a client population whose behavior may be unpredictable. It is important that you work with your host agency/facility to be trained in appropriate strategies for handling clients whose behavior becomes threatening. Whenever you feel uncomfortable with a client, inform your field instructor. It is acceptable to have your field instructor or another staff person accompany you when visiting such clients.

**Home Visits:** It is not uncommon for social workers in a variety of settings to conduct home visits. Such visits expose you to risks. It is important that all home visits be made with the full knowledge of your field instructor, including time of departure, time of return, as well as other activities while on the trip. Do not conduct a home visit when you feel uncomfortable or threatened in the situation. Return to the agency and report your experiences to your field instructor. Beware of dogs or other household pets that might be a threat. Do not make a visit when the presence of alcohol is detected. It may be appropriate for you to make visits accompanied by your field instructor. Do not take risks. Know who to call or what steps to take if you should experience a vehicle breakdown.

**After Hours Meetings:** Some practicum settings have activities that occur after normal operating hours. Be aware of the location or neighborhood where such activities take place; note street lighting, open spaces, shrubs and other growth that might impair vision. It is suggested that you always be

accompanied by your field instructor or someone else when going to your car after dark. Don't take risks. If you encounter a situation in which you are fearful do not hesitate to call local law enforcement.

**Assumption of the Risk:** I have read the above and understand that a field placement may present some risks. I also understand that prudent choices and exercising caution can minimize these risks. I further recognize that it is my responsibility to become informed of agency policy and practices regarding the above situations, and notify my field instructor or field faculty member if any concerns arise. Participant understands and acknowledges that there are risks, including significant risks, inherent in all Field Placement activities that can result in loss, damages, injury, or death, including, without limitation: activities potentially related to the Field Placement; travel risks such as accidents, crashes, and risks from autos operated by UA as well as autos operated by other individuals or entities or Field Placement Agency, poorly maintained roads, sidewalks, as well as criminal acts that can result in serious injury or death; premises risks, including those that may be owned by others and risks from water, such as drowning; injury risks from falls, collisions, or accidents (such as cuts, bruises, torn muscles, sprains, broken bones, etc.); outdoor risks, such as weather, lightning, heat or cold, bites, stings, allergic reactions, dehydration, hypothermia, drowning, sunburn, animals, and limited access to medical care; risks from others involved in the Field Placement (such as transmitted illnesses or others' actions); health risks, such as heart or respiratory events as well as other risks inherent in any strenuous activities, including things identified as "injury risks" herein; equipment risks, including failure, misuse, inherent risks, and risks from non-UA equipment; and other risks and hazards beyond the control of UA or others. Participant acknowledges that he/she has had an opportunity to investigate the Field Placement Agency before executing this form and, knowing and understanding all risks associated with the Field Placement, Participant nevertheless VOLUNTARILY AGREES TO ASSUME AND ACCEPT ALL RISKS that potentially accompany participation in the Field Placement. Participant also agrees to take all reasonable steps to avoid any risks, injury, or death.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Student CWID: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix C: Placement Exploration Tool

---



School of  
Social Work  
Office of Experiential Programs

## **Placement Exploration Tool (PET) Guide and FAQ**

**Introduction:** This guide serves to outline expectations and answer the most common questions that we've received in order to better prepare you to navigate these first steps of your placement process in communicating with agencies by phone and email. As many of you will be the first UA students placed your communities, the PET is intended to make the placement process more efficient and collaborative for you as an out-of-state student. This guide is not intended as a replacement for any existing materials, but as a complement to them, and we always encourage you to reference the [Practicum Toolkit](#) for all questions regarding general policy and procedure. **The Tool itself begins on page 6!**

**Essential Guidelines:** As a distance-learner working outside of Alabama, you are an ambassador both for the University and for our School in your town and in your state! With that in mind, we want to equip you to thrive in that role, starting with the following six pieces of essential guidance:

- I. Always address agency staff professionally and courteously, even if you encounter someone who does not extend you that same respect.
- II. Identify yourself and your purpose clearly each time you speak to someone new. Larger agencies often have two or more people answering calls for administrators and will appreciate your greeting them with your name, status as a UA School of Social Work BSW or MSW candidate, and the reason for your call.
- III. Study the agencies that you would like to explore before contacting them. Having a strong working knowledge of their programming will favorably impress administrators, increase their receptivity to you as a potential intern, and expand your knowledge of community resources.
- IV. Do not include your employer as a PET entry. Work-site applications are handled separately, and your employer can only be considered as a potential host if it receives approval according to the procedure outlined in the the Practicum Toolkit.
- V. If you have friends or professional associates affiliated with local social work agencies, we welcome you to reach out to them for advice. Personal connections are powerful and can help you to build new ones as you explore internship opportunities.
- VI. Please do not ask for an explanation or pressure agencies to reconsider if they indicate that they are not currently open to interns or are hesitant to host interns. The purpose of this process is exploration, not persuasion, so simply make note of your communication with that agency and proceed on to the next. The Practicum Education Program may follow up to learn more or, when appropriate, negotiate to create an opportunity.

- VII. You are our most valuable resource on the ground! Please notify us of any local barriers that might complicate your practicum (e.g. significant competition from other school or a reported shortage of MSW's) and share freely of your experiences to help guide our approach and adapt it to any unique challenges in your community.

### **Phone Script and Talking Points:**

A phone call is often the best way to gather initial information as some agencies are slow to respond to emails, use email screening services, or may not have the appropriate email addresses publicly listed. That said, it can sometimes be intimidating to contact an agency that you have no connection to, especially when you're asking to speak with a supervisor or director. Rest assured, however, that these calls are not only common, but welcomed by most agencies engaging with social workers and client systems. Here is a suggested script that you may use in communicating with your first point of contact:

***Good morning/afternoon,***

***My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm a student pursuing my bachelor's / master's degree in social work at The University of Alabama. I'm exploring internship opportunities in the community that would help me to develop my skills, and I'm reaching out to see if there might be any openings available with (agency name). Who might be the best person to speak with regarding a possible internship during (insert practicum term, i.e. fall / spring)?***

***Are they (you) available for a quick conversation now? If not, I'd be glad to leave a message or call back at a more convenient time.***

When you're able to connect to a supervisor or administrator who makes decisions regarding internships, you may then make use of the following **talking points:**

- *I'm particularly interested in your \_\_\_\_\_ program, department, etc. (make sure that you're familiar with it!), and I would be eager to intern there if an opportunity might be available during (insert practicum term).*
- *My background in X / my experience with X / passion for X / professional goal X is why I'm especially interested in an opportunity here.*
- *Are there any special requirements or application steps that I might need to complete as a prospective intern?*
- *One of the requirements of my prospective practicum is at least one hour of weekly supervision from someone with their MSW and two years of practice. Is anyone available on your staff or within your professional network who might be able to provide that for me?*

### If an opportunity is available:

- *Thank you so much for your time! I'm excited about this opportunity and appreciate your consideration.*
- *May I place you in contact with a Practicum Education coordinator from the School of Social work who will follow up to discuss this further by email?*
- *Could I collect your preferred contact information for you that I can relay to the Practicum Education Office?*

**\*At this stage you will now log your successful connection on your PET!\***

### If no opportunity is available:

- *Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me, and I appreciate your consideration.*

### Email Script:

After determining the best email address for someone who may be positioned to make decisions regarding internships (often administrators, directors, or social work/education coordinators), follow up on successful phone calls with an email, and **copy the Practicum Education Program (fieldoffice@sw.ua.edu) on that message**. Below is a template that you may make use of in communicating with agencies that you've found might be open to hosting you as an intern:

### Subject Line: Prospective BSW / MSW Intern, University of Alabama School of Social Work

*Good morning/afternoon,*

*Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me on the phone regarding a potential internship opportunity.*

*My name is \_\_\_\_, and I'm a student pursuing my bachelor's / master's degree in social work at The University of Alabama. I'm exploring internship opportunities in the X community that would help me to develop my skills, and I'm reaching out to see if there might be any openings available with (agency name).*

*I am especially interested in X program/aspect of your agency, and my background, passion, etc. in/for X makes me a strong candidate.*

*I'd be grateful for the chance to connect you with a practicum coordinator from the School of Social Work to explore a potential partnership. I'll look forward to our next conversation, and I appreciate both your time and consideration.*

*All the best,*

**Remember:** Your only goal at this stage is to gather information and present yourself professionally for potential consideration as an intern. Some agencies may invite you to visit to learn more or to schedule a time to have a conversation about your candidacy. You are welcome to do so, but in both cases please make sure to let them know that you are only gathering information and that a coordinator from the Practicum Office will be in contact soon to discuss the opportunity further.

**Do not make any representation or promise to an agency that the University has agreed or will agree to a placement with them.**

The Practicum Program cannot guarantee that you'll secure a placement with any given agency, so please communicate carefully and with the understanding that an agency's interest in hosting an intern does not necessarily make it a suitable fit.

### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):**

Before you reach out to explore potential opportunities, please take the time to review each of the following questions and consider any of your own that you'd like to see answered by the Practicum Education Program. Each of these questions represents something that two or more students have asked about, and we strongly encourage you to keep this guide at hand as a reference.

**Q: If an agency can't provide its own practicum instructor, will I not be able to complete a placement with it?**

*A: Identifying an eligible practicum instructor in your community is essential. If the agency does not have an MSW available on staff, affiliates, partners, and friends of the agency might still be available to volunteer in that capacity, and on occasion, students may be able to identify a local MSW who would be willing volunteer. The Practicum Education Program will explore these and other reasonable solutions in seeking a volunteer practicum instructor before rejecting a placement as unsuitable due to a lack of supervision.*

**Q: Am I allowed to contact agencies? I don't want to break any rules.**

*A: You are, of course, allowed to contact agencies in completing this portion of the placement process! As the procedure for in-state and out-of-state students differs, these instructions will apply specifically to you as a student seeking placement outside the state of Alabama. Please note that students pursuing placement in the state of Alabama, however, are asked not to contact agencies.*

**Q: I'm having a difficult time getting through to agencies/ Every agency I've contacted has said that they do not host interns. What do I do?**

**A:** *Flexibility and tenacity are essential social work skills, and we encourage you to trust in the process. You are only expected to gather information, not to secure a placement, and you need only share with us what you've found in communicating with local agencies, even if it's that agencies around you appear unable to accommodate an intern. Should that be the case, we will conduct additional research on our end to ensure that we secure you the opportunity to interview for a placement within 60 miles of your indicated counties.*

**Q:** **I love the agency that I've placed at the top of my PET form. Will I receive that as a placement?**

**A:** *Although we will prioritize the agencies that you share with us through your PET form(s), we cannot guarantee you a placement with any agency listed. Some agencies prove unsuitable after the Practicum Education Program's evaluation, others experience major staff turnover or leadership shifts that disrupt internship programming, and others still prove to be a weaker fit when compared to other potential host locations.*

These are the most common questions that we receive, but this not a comprehensive list. Please email the Practicum Education Program at [fieldoffice@sw.ua.edu](mailto:fieldoffice@sw.ua.edu) or reach out to your placement coordinator to share any additional questions that you have or to seek clarification on any of these answers should you need it.

Thank you for your attention and diligence in collaborating with the Practicum Education Program to identify potential placement opportunities!

All the best,

Practicum Education Team



**Full Name:**  
**CWID:**  
**Address:**

**Date:**  
**Term:**

## Placement Exploration Tool

**Instructions:** Out of state students will collaborate with the Practicum Education Office during the practicum placement process by identifying and contacting potential host agencies in their community and relaying their findings with this form. To that end, students must provide the Practicum Education Office with the information requested here for three viable placements in their geographic area. In order for any preferred placement opportunity to qualify for consideration, its entry must be completed below, and the agency must be willing to interview an intern and able to provide suitable supervision. While preferences are non-binding and placements cannot be guaranteed, the Practicum Education Office will honor your ranked entries here by prioritizing their consideration.

**Deadline:** This form must be completed and returned to the Practicum Education Office timely. Failure to meet the established deadline for your cohort may prevent you from entering practicum during your projected practicum term, and such a postponement will delay your graduation. Please contact your assigned placement coordinator immediately if you are having difficulty connecting with agencies or require other assistance with this form. Students who would like to propose more than three preferred agencies may complete the supplemental form on page 9.

### 1st Preference

#### I. Agency Information:

**Agency Name:**

**Date Contacted:**

**Agency Administrator (Title):**

**Administrator's E-mail Address:**

**Contact Number:**

**Street Address:**

**Website:**

**Agency administrator has confirmed that agency is willing to interview student?**

Yes

No

#### II. Practicum Supervision:

**Is an employee or affiliate with an MSW from a CSWE accredited university and two years of postgraduate experience able to provide weekly one hour supervision?**

Yes

No

**Name:**

**Phone:**

**E-mail:**

#### III. General Description of Agency and Student Learning Opportunities:

**2nd Preference****I. Agency Information:**

Agency Name:

Date Contacted:

Agency Administrator (Title):

Administrator's E-mail:

Contact Number:

Street Address:

Website:

Agency administrator has confirmed that agency is willing to interview student?

Yes

No

**II. Practicum Supervision:**

Is an employee or affiliate with an MSW from a CSWE accredited university and two years of postgraduate experience able to provide weekly one hour supervision?

Yes

No

Name:

Phone:

E-mail:

**III. General Description of Agency and Student Learning Opportunities:****3rd Preference****I. Agency Information:**

Agency Name:

Date Contacted:

Agency Administrator (Title):

Administrator's e-mail-address:

Phone Number:

E-mail:

Website:

Agency administrator has confirmed that agency is willing to interview student?

Yes

No

**II. Practicum Supervision:**

Is an employee or affiliate with an MSW from a CSWE accredited university and two years of postgraduate experience able to provide weekly one hour supervision?

Yes

No

Name:

Phone:

E-mail:

**III. General Description of Agency and Student Learning Opportunities:**

## Student Responsibilities:

All students are expected to assume the professional role appropriate to their level of development including:

- I) Adhering to the policies, procedures, and regulations of the agency.
- II) Representing the University of Alabama responsibly as a student ambassador.
- III) Following the agency's policies with respect to working hours, dress codes, and professional conduct. Absences due to illness or personal emergency must be made up if the minimum hours are not met (450 hours for BSW students, 500 hours for each MSW practicum placement).
- IV) Serving at their practicum placement at least 16 hours a week. Students are required to be in the practicum for two eight-hour days per week during typical business hours to meet the minimum requirement for practicum. Hours fewer than 16 per week will not count toward the practicum placement and students will not be considered in the practicum. The *only* exception will be the first week of the placement when students may accumulate fewer than 16 hours.
- V) Availing themselves of learning opportunities offered through in-service trainings, meetings, and conferences. These must be approved by the on-site practicum instructor/ task supervisor in advance and are not to include travel time or activities other than direct participation in specific professional workshops, meetings, or events.
- VI) Clearing the reasonable use of any confidential information and case material for instructional purposes with the practicum instructor and appropriately disguising the material to ensure client confidentiality.
- VII) Conducting themselves in ways consistent with the ethics of the profession, including the NASW Code of Ethics.
- VIII) Adhering to all practicum policies found in the [Practicum Toolkit](#).

---

***I hereby confirm that the information I have provided here is, to the best of my knowledge, true, correct, and complete. I acknowledge that this form's timely completion is essential and a requirement of my participation in practicum and pledge to uphold my practicum responsibilities.***

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Full Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

*Below is a supplemental form containing entries for 3 additional preferences. Should you identify more than 6 opportunities, please communicate with your assigned placement coordinator to discuss your findings and determine which leads are the most promising.*

## Supplemental Entries

### I. Agency Information:

#### 4th Preference

Agency Name:

Date Contacted:

Agency Administrator (Title):

Administrator's E-mail Address:

Contact Number:

Street Address:

Website:

Agency administrator has confirmed that agency is willing to interview student?

Yes

No

### II. Practicum Supervision:

Is an employee or affiliate with an MSW from a CSWE accredited university and two years of postgraduate experience able to provide weekly one hour supervision?

Yes

No

Name:

Phone:

E-mail:

### III. General Description of Agency and Student Learning Opportunities:

**I. Agency Information:****5th Preference**

Agency Name:

Date Contacted:

Agency Administrator (Title):

Administrator's E-mail:

Contact Number:

Street Address:

Website:

Agency administrator has confirmed that agency is willing to interview student?

Yes

No

**II. Practicum Supervision:**

Is an employee or affiliate with an MSW from a CSWE accredited university and two years of postgraduate experience able to provide weekly one hour supervision?

Yes

No

Name:

Phone:

E-mail:

**III. General Description of Agency and Student Learning Opportunities:****I. Agency Information:****6th Preference**

Agency Name:

Date Contacted:

Agency Administrator (Title):

Administrator's e-mail-address:

Phone Number:

E-mail:

Website:

Agency administrator has confirmed that agency is willing to interview student?

Yes

No

**II. Practicum Supervision:**

Is an employee or affiliate with an MSW from a CSWE accredited university and two years of postgraduate experience able to provide weekly one hour supervision?

Yes

No

Name:

Phone:

E-mail:

**III. General Description of Agency and Student Learning Opportunities:**