



University at Buffalo

School of Social Work

Practicum Education Handbook 2025-2026

The UB School of Social Work practicum education program benefits from the contributions of many individuals. A special thanks to members of our Practicum Community Advisory Board and to our practicum educators whose expertise helps to ensure a quality program for our students. Their time and experience make it possible for students to develop into more responsive, skilled, and ethical practitioners.

The Practicum Education Team

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Non-Discrimination and Harassment Policy Notice

The University at Buffalo is committed to ensuring equal access to its programs and activities. The Discrimination and Harassment Policy can be viewed [here](#).

Also, see the practicum Handbook section entitled *Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures*.

Victim Assistance

If a student is affected by a crime or is the survivor of an unwanted sexual experience, victim assistance is available through the University at Buffalo's Student Life Department. The office is located at 9 Norton Hall, North Campus, and can be reached at (716) 645-6154. For more information visit the [Victim's Assistance website](#)

If an incident occurs at your practicum, please notify your faculty liaison.

Student Injury

The University provides general liability insurance for all students who are in a non-employment based practicum. This does not cover personal injury: if a student is injured in practicum, coverage for care should be provided by their private healthcare insurance.

Felony Disclosure

The University at Buffalo School of Social Work supports the State University of New York Board of Trustees' decision to remove application questions asking about prior felony convictions. Applicants to the University who have a felony offense in their background no longer need to report that information at the time of application. UB students will be asked to declare any prior felony convictions after admission when seeking campus housing or participating in clinical or practicum experiences, internships, or study abroad programs.

All accepted MSW students, full and part-time, traditional and advanced standing, and all dual degree students, will be required to disclose any and all prior felonies when completing their practicum application. This will prompt a meeting with a practicum education team member who will advise the student on how best to discuss their situation with prospective practicums, which may include the practicum coordinator informing the practicum site.

Students who do have a past felony must understand that they may encounter challenges in securing a practicum, depending on the nature of the charge(s). If students are unable to successfully complete practicum education requirements, it will result in dismissal from the program.

Students are responsible for investigating the licensure requirements in the state in which they wish to practice. Please note that any past criminal conviction may result in the denial of state licensure. Applicants should contact the governmental department that licenses social workers in the state they wish to practice.

INTRODUCTION

Practicum education is an integral part of the overall MSW curriculum. Students complete this component of their social work education through participation in supervised practicum experiences at agencies or institutions that have entered into a contractual arrangement with the School of Social Work. The School is affiliated with over 600 agencies, some with multiple sites, providing a variety of social work settings. Practicum education provides students with the opportunity to integrate and apply the social work theories, skills, and values they are learning via coursework in a practice setting. It allows for this foundation of knowledge to come alive with real-life experiences. The practicum provides a critical forum for the student's socialization into the social work profession. All candidates for the MSW degree are required to successfully complete the practicum requirements.

This handbook has been prepared as a guide to the practicum education curriculum, policies, and procedures. It is intended to provide information about the various roles and expectations of those involved in the agency-school partnership in the education of MSW students. This handbook, together with the School of Social Work Student Handbook, the School of Social Work Website, and the School of Social Work Pre-Orientation Course on UB Learns, is intended to provide a comprehensive guide to the MSW program. If you have any questions specific to your practicum education experience, please contact your assigned faculty liaison.

The School appreciates the commitment of the agencies and practicum educators involved in training our students. Without this investment, we would not be able to prepare MSW students for entry into the profession. Please feel free to direct any questions or suggestions regarding this handbook to the Practicum Education Department.

Policies and procedures in the practicum handbook reflect our program's dedication to excellence and ethics in Social Work education. Any revisions represent our ongoing commitment to continuous quality improvement.

On a final note, the contents of this handbook need to be taken into account in their entirety. Multiple sections may be relevant to a single concern.

The Practicum Education Team welcomes you to our program. We look forward to working with you.

UB SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

Please see the following link to review the UB School of Social Work [Mission, Values, and Goals](#).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) ABOUT PRACTICUM CONCERNS AND POLICIES*

*Note: We have included this section as a quick reference for students seeking information on some frequently asked questions. Other relevant sections in the handbook should also be reviewed.

Practicum Structure and Policies

How are organizations selected to be practicum sites?

- Practicum sites are developed based on their appropriateness for providing students with the experiences they need to complete their practicums.
 - When developing a new site, the practicum team assesses the agency's capacity to provide meaningful learning experiences in accordance with CSWE competency standards, provide appropriate supervision, and adhere to our accreditation requirements and SSW standards.
 - The practicum department also engages in ongoing monitoring of practicum sites to ensure they continue to be suitable for meeting student learning needs.

Does the practicum Department ever change student practicums or discontinue sites?

- Yes, under certain circumstances. The decision to change a student practicum or discontinue a practicum site is only made with careful consideration and consultation.
 - Examples of situations that may lead to a decision to change a student practicum or discontinue a site include, but are not limited to: safety, unethical behavior on the part of the student or agency; absence of required supervision; and other significant problems that cannot be resolved despite problem-solving efforts.
- If a situation arises but a change in practicum is not necessary, we engage in a process of dialogue and discussion with the practicum educator, task supervisor (if applicable), and agency to remedy challenges or issues.
 - The practicum team, practicum liaisons, and practicum Educators are all available to work through any concerns with students related to student expectations for their practicums.
 - **Note:** It is important for students to remain assigned practicums, even when practicums are imperfect or not as expected, because each practicum is designed to provide students with learning experiences that correspond with CSWE competency requirements. This is discussed in greater detail in this document below.

(Please refer to the practicum Handbook section(s) on Quality of Instruction or Selection, Monitoring and Evaluation of practicum educators and Agencies, and Trauma-informed practicum Instruction.

Also see the section on Negotiating Practicum Issues below.

Roles and Responsibilities

What are the roles of various practicum personnel?

Practicum faculty and staff develop, manage, and oversee all practicums. The UBSSW has a practicum team, which consists of the director and several practicum faculty and staff.

- The **practicum team** functions primarily independently within the School, in a manner similar to a department. The practicum team's roles include: facilitating student and practicum educator orientations, assigning students to practicum sites, monitoring student progress in the practicum, troubleshooting practicum concerns, and developing and maintaining partnerships with community agencies, among others.
- When students are completing their practicums, they work with a professional group, consisting of a **practicum educator** (an MSW-level supervisor), a **faculty liaison**, and the **UB practicum team**. Some

practicum students also have a **task supervisor** (see detailed description below). This structure is in place to provide students with the support they need to be successful in the practicum.

- Each practicum site has a **practicum educator**. The practicum educator is a degreed social worker, internal to the agency, and this person provides the overall supervision for the practicum.
- A **practicum faculty liaison (practicum liaison)** is also assigned to each practicum site to oversee the practicum. The practicum liaison is the bridge between the practicum and the UBSSW.
 - The practicum liaison is the initial point person if an issue or challenge arises within the practicum.
 - The practicum liaison is supposed to schedule a meeting with the practicum student and the practicum educator once per semester. The practicum liaison should also be available for consultation when needed.
 - The practicum liaison is in place to support students and to initiate problem-solving processes if there is an issue in the practicum. Students should reach out to their practicum liaison anytime they have questions, a problem, or a concern. (If a student is unable to resolve an issue in partnership with their practicum educator and liaison, then they should contact the practicum team.)
- While the practicum educator oversees the practicum and provides social work supervision, in some instances, a **task supervisor** may be assigned to manage the various day-to-day tasks associated with the practicum.
 - A task supervisor does not have to be a degree-holding social worker. The task supervisor should work closely with the practicum educator at the practicum site to support the learning process. An MSW is not required for task supervisors, but they are expected to have a solid understanding of social services.
 - The task supervisor typically has expertise in an area that expands a student's learning opportunities. Task supervisors are expected to join supervision regularly (every other week), but they are not required to be present during each supervision session.
- In rare instances, an **outside practicum educator** is used so that a student can complete a practicum at an agency where there is not a degree-holding social worker on staff.
 - UBSSW contracts with outside practicum educators and arranges for them to provide the same supervision that an internal practicum educator usually provides.
 - Outside practicum educators join the agency for the weekly social work supervision.
 - This model is used when an internal practicum educator is not available within the agency.

For more specific information about the roles of the student and the people who work with the student on behalf of the practicum, please see the **Roles and Responsibilities** section of this handbook.

Negotiating Practicum Issues

If I experience issues at practicum, how should I address them?

Students should engage in the following steps if they experience problems in the practicum:

1. Discuss the problem with the **practicum educator** and **task supervisor** (if applicable)
2. Contact the **practicum liaison** if more problem-solving is needed, or if the problems cannot be resolved with the practicum educator/task supervisor
3. If the educator/task supervisor and liaison cannot resolve the problem, or if students are not satisfied with the assistance being provided, students should reach out to someone on the **practicum team**
4. If the contact on the practicum team cannot provide adequate assistance, then students should contact the **practicum director**.

If I don't like my practicum, or I want a different practicum, what should I do?

- In general, students are expected to remain in their assigned practicums because each site is carefully selected for each student. Practicum sites are developed in partnership with the UBSSW after undergoing a rigorous evaluation to determine that each site meets the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) requirements for the development of social work competencies.
 - Even when practicums are imperfect or not as expected, each practicum offers opportunities to develop important skills.

- Often, imperfect or unexpected practicums provide the most valuable learning experiences, because students are able to learn to be flexible and to function outside of their comfort zones.
- The practicum team, practicum liaisons, and practicum educators are all available to work through any concerns with students related to student expectations for their practicums.

If my practicum educator is not satisfied with my performance, what will happen?

If a student experiences difficulties in practicum, the practicum team, educator, and liaison will work together to engage in a collaborative problem-solving process with the student.

- The first step to this process is usually the development and implementation of a student development plan, where the practicum educator and student are asked to commit to negotiated expectations and behaviors.
- The student development plan is developed by the practicum liaison in consultation with the student's practicum educator and task supervisor (if applicable) and the practicum education office.
- If the implementation of a student development plan does not resolve the issue(s), the student may have to be moved to a new practicum without penalty (if the issue is caused by the agency), or termination or practicum failure can result (if the issue is a result of a problem with the student's performance).

What do I do if my practicum experience is different from my expectations about social work and/or the role of social workers?

- Students often find that their practicum varies greatly from what their expectation of social work is- and that is okay!
 - Social workers use a wide variety of skills across micro, mezzo, and macro levels to pursue positive social change.
 - Students are encouraged to be open to the learning process, as all practicum sites have been vetted for appropriateness pertaining to MSW-level social work education.
 - Even when students start off with practicums that do not match their expectations, they typically find that they have learned a lot by the end of the practicum. For example, students can learn vital assessment, planning, and intervention skills across a wide range of settings.
 - Students are encouraged to creatively utilize practicum educator supervision, their learning contract, and their faculty liaison to develop learning opportunities consistent with the nine social work practicum competencies.
 - Students are encouraged to dialogue with their practicum educators to explore a variety of learning experiences to integrate student interests with agency needs and capacity. For example, students can potentially explore opportunities in another part of the agency, seek collaborations with agency partners, conduct research/evaluations, and/or engage in outside trainings.

I have a problem in my practicum, but I am worried that if I tell someone, I will be penalized. What should I do? Why is it important that students come forward with practicum concerns?

- Students are not penalized for identifying problems in the practicum.
 - The student's ability to discuss problems directly is an essential work skill and an important component of a successful practicum.
 - Student safety and learning are the top priorities for the practicum department. If students are experiencing a problem, they should first notify the practicum educator, then the practicum liaison, then someone in the practicum team (as noted above). The process of addressing practicum concerns is often a valuable learning experience for the student; it helps to prepare them for the workforce.

I have trouble being direct when I need to discuss something with my practicum educator or task supervisor. What should I do?

- Social workers often need to have difficult conversations with clients, peers, and supervisors. The ability to directly and appropriately communicate problems and concerns is a crucial skill for social workers.
- For this reason, it is expected that students will initiate the discussion of practicum challenges with the practicum educator and/or task supervisors, the liaison, and/or the practicum team. Students are encouraged to practice their direct communication skills during their practicum, despite the fact that this may sometimes create discomfort.

If a task supervisor or practicum educator displays inappropriate or unprofessional behavior, what are the options for students?

- Students are encouraged to gain clarity from their supervisor anytime an issue of concern arises. For example, students can ask for help to better understand why a practicum educator or task supervisor responded in a certain way.
- Sometimes an explanation can better clarify and contextualize behavior. However, if the concern cannot be resolved with supervision or if the situation constitutes an emergency, students should contact their faculty liaison and a member of the practicum team as soon as possible.
- Practicum educators are bound by the NASW Code of Ethics, and they have entered into a practicum learning agreement with the University, so it is expected that they will guide the practicum accordingly.

If a faculty liaison displays inappropriate or unprofessional behavior, what are the options for students?

- If a student has an issue with a faculty liaison that cannot be resolved between the two, the student should contact a member of the practicum department.

Can I discuss my practicum concerns with members of the practicum team in a confidential manner?

- This depends on the individual situation.
 - Concerns can often be discussed confidentially with the practicum team.
 - However, there are times when issues arise that must involve problem-solving with multiple people. If this occurs, the practicum team will work with the student in advance to prepare for any communication or meetings that are required.

If a student is experiencing fear or stress about addressing a practicum issue, how should they proceed?

- Practicum education can create a range of emotions for students—this is normal and expected. Learning to have difficult conversations and coping with related discomfort can help students prepare for entering the workforce.
- Students are encouraged to practice addressing practicum issues directly and utilizing the support of their practicum educator, faculty liaison, and members of the practicum team when needed (as indicated above).

If I overhear a student discussing their struggles in practicum, what is my responsibility?

- Practicum issues are often complex, and practicum students may lean on their peers for support during the practicum.
- If a student is approached by a peer about a practicum issue, it is useful to listen to the peer's concerns and encourage them to reach out to their educator, liaison, and/or someone on the practicum team to formally process their concerns.
- If a peer is informed of an issue that constitutes an ethical violation or emergency, then that concern should be brought to the practicum team as soon as possible.

What role, if any, should social media/technology play in practicum experiences?

- Students are encouraged to communicate about practicum directly with the practicum educator, liaison, or practicum team.
- Problems in the practicum should **not** be discussed on social media, as social media is a public platform, and practicum experiences are private and unique to each student. Social media posts are also permanent, and they can create misunderstandings.
- It is always best to bring practicum concerns directly to the practicum team, educators, or liaisons.
- Students need to be guided by the policy of their practicum agency related to social media, and the School policy on ethical behavior across all settings, including social media, located in the Student Handbook under Ethical Standards of Behavior and Student Violations of Ethical Standards of Behavior.
- Students are also expected to follow the School's technical standards, the NASW Code of Ethics, and the University standards of behavior at all times, including, but not limited to: classes, practicums, volunteer work, **and digital contexts. Digital contexts include but are not limited to online social networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, etc.), text messaging, blogging, any virtual worlds, and email.**

- As is noted in the National Association of Social Work’s Technology Standards, “When communicating with the public using websites, blogs, social media, or other forms of electronic communication, social workers should make every effort to ensure that the information reflects the values, ethics, and mission of the profession. Social workers should consult relevant standards in the NASW Code of Ethics for guidance (especially related to competence; conflicts of interest; privacy and confidentiality; respect; dishonesty, fraud, and deception; misrepresentation; solicitations; private conduct; and acknowledging credit) (p.10).”

What role does the Committee on Students (COS) have in relation to practicum?

- If a practicum student is suspected of an ethical violation, the Committee on Students will be brought in to determine the circumstances surrounding this concern. The Committee on Students (COS) will meet, consider the facts of each case individually, and determine the status of all students suspected of violating the School’s technical standards, the NASW Code of Ethics, or the University Student Code of Conduct.

practicum Hours and termination

If a student fails a practicum or is terminated from a practicum, will the hours have to be repeated?

- If a student’s practicum has to be terminated due to student performance issues/ethical concerns, then the previously completed hours **will not count** towards the completion of the practicum.
 - Students who are terminated from practicum due to performance/ethical concerns must undergo a review process with an appointed committee.
 - If the review determines that a student should be re-placed in practicum after the review process, any previous practicum hours will need to be repeated. This process parallels what occurs when a student fails a regular course (when a student fails a course, the entire course must be repeated).
- If a student is removed from practicum through no fault of their own, they will be placed at a new site.
 - In these instances, the previously completed hours will count towards the practicum.
 - However, there are times when additional hours have to be added to a practicum following a disruption. For example, in some instances, additional hours may be required to fully orient a student to the new practicum or to ensure that all competencies have been met.
 - Since these situations are individualized, a member of the practicum team will work directly with each student to arrange the circumstances surrounding finding a new practicum.
 - Formal reviews for dismissal from the practicum are conducted when warranted. For additional information, see Practicum Handbook sections on Termination of Practicum, Student Withdrawal from Practicum, and Appendix G, Practicum Status Review.

Student Privacy

What information can be shared between the School and a student’s practicum educator?

- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal policy guiding the confidentiality of educational records.
 - The UBSSW adheres to these guidelines in regard to communication about practicum. The practicum team can communicate with practicum educators or liaisons on a “need to know” educational basis only.
 - For example, if a change in a student’s academic status will result in practicum disruption, or if there is a safety concern, the practicum educator would need to be notified. The practicum team works with the student to create a communication process that is comfortable for the student whenever possible.
 - Disclosure of sensitive information, such as information about personal or family problems, illness, or criminal history, will never be shared with the educator or liaison without a student’s written permission.

TRAUMA-INFORMED TEACHING AND LEARNING IN PRACTICUM EDUCATION

The UBSSW has adopted a trauma-informed and human rights curriculum, taking into account the role of traumatic life events on all individuals, including students. Within practicum education, we are committed to a trauma-informed perspective – one that cultivates success and allows students to feel both challenged and supported.

❖ What we expect from students – Integrity, Ethical Behavior, and a Learning Stance

Students must adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics and follow guidelines around student roles and responsibilities as outlined in the practicum Handbook. Students are expected to take a learner's stance, being open to constructive feedback and participating in problem-solving processes when issues arise. If personal issues begin to impact practicum, students have an ethical responsibility to seek assistance from the UB SSW Student Services team, and/or from personal support. Students are also expected to communicate adequately any issues that may interfere with practicum performance with their faculty liaisons and educators.

❖ What students can expect from us – High Expectations and High Support

Expectations for students are high in a graduate practicum course. Students must adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics, fulfill their student roles and responsibilities as outlined in the practicum Handbook, and participate in problem-solving processes when issues arise. At the same time, the practicum office will always be responsive to student questions and concerns and will assist students when problems arise in practicum. The Practicum Education Office works to ensure that practicum policies are transparent and that expectations around student performance are clear. The practicum Office adheres to educational policies established by the Council on Social Work Education to maintain accreditation.

❖ Trauma-informed principles include safety, choice, trustworthiness, collaboration, and empowerment.

Safety: Information about practicum safety can be found in the practicum Handbook. The practicum Handbook also outlines University policies and resources on sexual harassment and victim assistance. When issues arise in practicum, the faculty liaison supports the student and agency representatives through the process of problem-solving. It is important that students feel physically and emotionally safe in their practicum setting. If a physical or emotional safety issue arises in practicum, we encourage students to communicate this to the faculty liaison or someone with whom they feel comfortable. The liaison and/or practicum department will want to problem-solve and be proactive in remedying the situation.

Choice: Students indicate broad areas of interest on their foundation practicum application and are then matched with an approved foundation practicum site. In advanced years, students choose from an array of established practicum sites and can recommend new sites to the practicum Office. Students are encouraged to take advantage of all relevant learning opportunities. With practicum educator approval, attendance at relevant training can count towards practicum hours.

Trustworthiness: Students are expected to produce high-quality work, adhering to the code of ethics, and practicing social work with the integrity expected of a social work practitioner. The practicum Office outlines policies and procedures in the practicum Handbook. Practicum course objectives are outlined in the Practicum Course Syllabus. Policies and procedures are also addressed in practicum orientation sessions.

Collaboration: Students collaborate with their practicum educator in developing the learning contract, which then guides their practicum experience. Students should take a learner's stance as they engage with agency personnel and their practicum educator, conveying an openness to feedback and an interest and enthusiasm for new learning. Asking for help is encouraged, and students should communicate and collaborate with the agency and practicum office when issues arise.

Empowerment: Students are encouraged to schedule one-on-one meetings with practicum faculty and staff around practicum decisions. While in practicum, students can speak to their faculty liaison regarding any questions or concerns. Students can nominate themselves to serve on the practicum education Community Advisory Board. Students may provide feedback directly to members of the practicum team or anonymously via the end-of-year practicum survey.

UB SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK RESTORATIVE PROCESS FOR RESPONDING TO RACISM & OTHER FORMS OF OPPRESSION EXPERIENCED BY STUDENTS

Students may experience or witness racism, heterosexism, cissexism (i.e., oppressive behavior and policies targeting transgender/non-binary people), and other forms of oppression in their classroom and/or practicum. These incidents could involve faculty, staff, faculty liaisons, practicum educators, or other students. The UBSSW is committed to addressing these incidents in a trauma-informed and restorative manner when they occur. The following outlines a restorative process that serves as a guide when students have experienced racism and/or other forms of oppression in their practicum.

The Goals of a Restorative Process

- To build community
- To strengthen relationships
- To repair any harm that has occurred through participatory decision-making.

Trauma-Informed and Restorative Principles

TI-Principles	Restorative Values and Principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety: All parties will commit to creating a safe, brave space for students and other parties to share what happened, how it impacted them, and what needs to happen to repair and prevent future harm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak and listen with respect. • Speak and listen from the heart. • Parties to a conflict “own the conflict” and are the ones who resolve the conflict.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustworthiness and Transparency: Administrators, faculty, and staff will be transparent with students and other parties about the process. No action will be taken without the student’s consent, unless administrators, faculty, and staff determine, with full disclosure to the student, that the situation poses too much risk of physical and/or emotional harm for the student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust, mutual understanding, and shared values bind us together and make cooperative action possible. • Fair Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Engagement – Shared involvement in decision-making. ✓ Explanation – Provide a rationale for decisions. ✓ Expectation Clarity – Widespread understanding of expectations. • Confidentiality is upheld throughout the process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Support: Peer support and mutual self-help are important for establishing safety. The student may bring a peer to the restorative conversation, preferably someone who is aware of the impact the incident had on the student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of one’s community of care may contribute meaningfully to the conversation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration and Mutuality: Importance is placed on leveling of power differences and in the meaningful sharing of decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embraces values of community participation, community caring, and respectful dialogue. • We build our social capital by repairing relationships. • The needs of all affected are addressed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment, Voice, & Choice: Students will have choice about the extent to which the UBSSW administration, faculty, and staff will intervene in the situation, unless administrators, faculty, and staff determine, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation is voluntary. • All voices matter. • Everyone speaks their truth. • We build relationships and a sense of community through participatory learning and decision-making.

TI-Principles	Restorative Values and Principles
with full disclosure to the student, that the situation poses too much risk of physical and/or emotional harm for the student. The voices of all parties to the incident will be heard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parties to a conflict “own the conflict” and are the ones who resolve the conflict.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active Movement to Create Culturally Responsive Environments: The UBSSW recognizes that our students, administrators, faculty, and staff are impacted by interpersonal and institutional racism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism (i.e., oppressive behavior and policies targeting transgender/non-binary people), classism, and other forms of oppression. The UBSSW is committed to eradicating racism and other forms of oppression in our curricula and policies. Operations and culture. The UBSSW recognizes that we are all learners when it comes to undoing white supremacy and other systems of oppression, and that we must act. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embraces values of healing, moral learning, community participation, community caring, respectful dialogue, and repairing harm.

When a student has experienced racism or another form of oppression in the classroom or in a practicum:

1. Whenever possible, we encourage students to professionally address the issue directly with the person involved. However, we understand that many reasons exist for why students may choose not to address the situation directly as a first step.
2. It is our best hope that the student will tell someone. We hope the student will reach out to someone they trust. This could be a faculty member, a Program Director, a Student Services staff person, a practicum Liaison, a practicum educator, a practicum education faculty member or staff person, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, the Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, or the Faculty Support Liaison for Racially Underrepresented Students. We have multiple point persons in this process in line with our principle of providing students with choice over the person from whom they want to access help and resources. This person can help the student process the incident and potential options for intervention. This conversation will be held in confidence unless the administrator, faculty member, or staff member believes, with full disclosure to the student, that the situation poses too much risk of physical and/or emotional harm for the student and that someone else needs to be pulled into the conversation.
3. **If the student would like assistance in addressing the situation with the individual who harmed them, the student simply needs to make that desire known to the faculty member, staff person, or administrator to whom they disclosed the situation.** The people who can help them identify a facilitator are the Program Directors, the Associate Deans, the faculty liaison for Racially Underrepresented Students, practicum Faculty and staff, and Student Services staff.
4. A Restorative Conversation will be scheduled at a time convenient for all parties. If the conflict occurred between one or more students in a class, the students’ class professor may be the best person to facilitate the conversation. In other situations, the conversation may be most appropriately facilitated by a neutral UBSSW administrator, faculty member, or staff person who is not involved with the incident. Factors to consider in the choice of the facilitator will be the student’s preference, whether the incident was in practicum or in the classroom, and the availability, comfort level, and neutrality of the person(s) being considered.
5. If students, faculty, or staff have any questions about this process, please do not hesitate to contact the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

What does a Restorative Conversation look like?

- The facilitator will reach out to the parties involved, gather their perspectives on the incident, and schedule a time for a restorative conversation that is convenient for all parties.
- When the parties convene, the facilitator will review guiding principles for the conversation (i.e., One person speaks at a time; Speak from the I-perspective; Listen with openness).
- The facilitator will ask each party, beginning with the student, to address:
 1. What happened?
 2. What did you think and feel at the time?
 3. What have you thought about since?
 4. What impact has it had on you?
 5. What has been the hardest thing for you?
 6. What do you think needs to happen to make things right?
- The facilitator will invite each party to ask any clarifying questions they may have, to identify what they would like to see happen as a result of the conversation, and to identify ways that the harm can be repaired. The facilitator will allow time for consensus to be achieved.
- The conversation will end with the facilitator summarizing any agreements that were reached.

Guiding Principles for UBSSW Community Members

- This work is important. It is grounded in our shared values, with people with whom we have relationships and shared commitments.
- We will make mistakes. We will learn, grow, and keep going.
- We value acknowledging and repairing harm when harm has occurred.
- We bring an awareness to these conversations of power differentials.
- Addressing racism and other forms of oppression is more important than how concerns may sometimes get expressed. We will keep that in perspective. Both the content and the process provide us with opportunities for learning.

A Restorative Conversation is not the same as a Restorative Conference.

A formal Restorative Conference, called a Real Justice Conference, may be necessary for some situations when the scope of the harm is wide and involves multiple students, faculty, practicum personnel, and/or staff persons.

In a Restorative Conference, all involved parties come together with a trained facilitator to explore what happened, who was affected, and what needs to be done to make things right. Parties to the incident typically invite members of their communities of care (e.g., family members, friends, other colleagues).

Right now, the UBSSW expects that most incidents can be resolved with a Restorative Conversation. However, we are in the process of thinking about and identifying situations that may call for a formal Restorative Conference.

UB Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Students can also report any concerns about discrimination and harassment to the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. The Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion will speak with any UB community member confidentially to discuss concerns about classroom or workplace situations, provide support, and investigate complaints.

[Obtaining Assistance and Advice](#)

[Reporting Discrimination and Harassment](#)

References

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014a). SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. <https://library.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/sma14-4884.pdf>

Wachtel, T. (2016). *Defining restorative*. Bethlehem, PA: International Institute for Restorative Practices. https://www.iirp.edu/images/pdf/Defining-Restorative_Nov-2016.pdf

MSW CURRICULUM

It is essential for practicum educators and students to understand how the practicum education component of the MSW program interfaces with all other courses to ensure successful integration between practicum and academic courses. A full description of the curriculum can be found in *Appendix A*.

STRUCTURE OF THE PRACTICUM EDUCATION PROGRAM

(See also practicum Program Structure Table.)

Regular Full-Time Program

Students in the regular full-time program (including BA/MSW, MPH/MSW & MBA/MSW students) complete two practicums. Foundation practicum is completed concurrently with Interventions I, Interventions II, and SW 555, practicum Seminar. A minimum of 420 hours is required for the first practicum, and a minimum of 480 hours for the second practicum, for a total of 900 hours, as required by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

The first (foundation) practicum is designed to provide a generalist experience, allowing students to develop basic social work skills in a broad range of social work activities. The second (advanced year) practicum takes place in a setting that provides a focus on developing advanced skills in the student's chosen area of practice.

Foundation practicums span two consecutive semesters for 15 hours per week. **SW 550 (practicum I)** is taken in the Fall semester, and **SW 551 (practicum II)** is taken in the Spring semester. Students begin the foundation practicum starting the 5th week of the semester.

Practicum Seminar (SW 555) meets 15 times over the course of two semesters, and must be taken concurrently with SW 550 and 551. This course is designed to provide students with a professional forum where they can share the integration of their coursework and practicum work, utilizing reflection tools and case-based scenarios.

Students in the Advanced Year practicum are generally in practicum two days (15 hours) per week for two consecutive semesters. Full-time students complete this practicum during Fall (SW 552) and Spring (SW 553) semesters.

Full-time students are generally expected to be at their practicum site for a regular 8-hour day during the normal (traditional) work week (Monday-Friday). This is based on 7.5 practicum hours with a half-hour lunch break that is not counted toward practicum hours. An alternate schedule can be arranged at the request of a practicum site. Schedules should be determined at the start of the practicum and followed consistently.

Part-time Program

Students in the part-time program complete two practicums. Foundation practicum is completed concurrently with Interventions I, Interventions II, and SW 555 (practicum Seminar). A minimum of 420 hours is required for the first practicum, and a minimum of 480 hours for the second practicum, for a total of 900 hours, as required by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

The first (foundation) practicum is designed to provide a generalist experience, allowing students to develop basic social work skills in a broad range of social work activities. The second (Advanced Year) practicum takes place in a setting that provides a focus on developing advanced skills in the student's chosen area of practice.

The part-time program foundation practicum and concurrent practicum Seminar begins in the fourth semester. Students begin foundation practicums in the 5th week of the semester.

Practicum Seminar (SW 555) meets 15 times over the course of two semesters, and must be taken concurrently with SW 550 and 551. The Practicum Seminar is designed to allow students a professional forum where they will have opportunities to share the integration of their coursework and practicum work using reflection tools and case-based scenarios. Both the practicum education course and the practicum Seminar must be completed successfully to receive credit.

The foundation practicum spans two consecutive semesters, two days or 15 hours per week. SW 550 (practicum I) is taken in the fall semester, and SW 551 (practicum II) is taken in the spring semester.

The Advanced Year practicum is two days or 15 hours per week for two consecutive semesters. Part-time students complete their Advanced Year practicum in the Spring (SW 552) and Summer (SW 553) semesters.

While practicum hours can be arranged to span across several days, it is essential that the hours of practicum provide learning opportunities that will meet the educational integrity of the practicum experience and meet the stated schedule requirements. Students need to maintain a consistent weekly practicum schedule to ensure continuity for the practicum agency.

We cannot guarantee that a student will be able to be placed in practicums with evening and/or weekend hours. An extremely limited number of sites have some evening and weekend hours, but these are increasingly the exception. Students should expect practicums to require daytime responsibilities and plan their availability accordingly. Students should begin planning well in advance to balance work, class, and personal commitments. A student who cannot be present during daytime hours or cannot adjust their own work schedules to accommodate a practicum may find that they need to delay the practicum until the following academic year.

If students are at their practicum site for a regular 8-hour day, they are expected to have a half-hour lunch break that is not counted toward practicum hours. Therefore, the time counted toward practicum would be 7.5 hours.

Advanced Standing Program – Full and Part-time

Students accepted into the advanced standing program complete one practicum focusing on their chosen area of practice. The initial practicum is waived with the understanding that they have completed a foundation-level practicum via their CSWE-accredited BSW program. The total minimum required hours are 480.

The Advanced Year practicum is two days or 15 hours per week for two consecutive semesters. Full-time Advanced Standing students generally complete their Advanced Year practicum in the Fall (SW 552) and Spring (SW 553) semesters. Part-time Advanced Standing students generally complete their Advanced Year practicum in the Spring (SW 552) and Summer (SW 553) semesters. A concurrent practicum Seminar (SW 555) meets 15 times over the course of two semesters and must be taken concurrently with SW 552 and 553. The Practicum Seminar is designed to allow students a professional forum where they will have opportunities to share the integration of their coursework and practicum work using reflection tools and case-based scenarios. Both the practicum education course and practicum Seminar must be completed successfully in order to receive credit.

If students are at their practicum site for a regular 8-hour day, they are expected to have a half-hour lunch break that is not counted toward practicum hours. Therefore, the time counted toward practicum would be 7.5 hours.

JD/MSW Program

Students in the JD/MSW program may choose to begin the four-year degree program either in the Law School or the School of Social Work. Students in this program complete one practicum in the School of Social Work and a second practicum in the Law Clinic.

BA/ MSW, MSW/MBA, and MSW/MPH Programs – See “Regular Full-time Program” section above.

Online Part-time MSW Program—See “Part-time Program” section above.

UB School of Social Work has some established practicum sites in various regions. Students should also be prepared to research and outreach to potential practicum sites in their own region, in an effort to secure an interview for the practicum. Students will work closely with their assigned practicum Coordinator during the process of securing a practicum. To be most successful, students should be in regular communication with their practicum Coordinator. There are a number of resources and supports available to assist students.

See the “Employment-Based Practicum Options” section below as another option for online students.

Practicum Education Program Structure

Regular Full-Time Program

Students in the regular full-time program must complete **two practicums** totaling **at least 900 hours**.

- **Foundation Year Practicum:** Minimum of 420 hours, starting in Fall (week 5) and continuing in Spring (beginning before classes). Students must take the Practicum Seminar course concurrently with their time in their first practicum at the UBSSW.
 - **Advanced Year Practicum:** Minimum of 480 hours, beginning at the start of the Fall semester and ending at the conclusion of the Spring semester.
 - Courses:
 - Practicum I – SW 550 / SW 555
 - Practicum II – SW 551 / SW 555
 - Practicum III – SW 552
 - Practicum IV – SW 553
 - **Weekly Commitment:** 15 hours per week throughout both practicums.
-

Regular Part-Time Program

- **Foundation Year Practicum:** Minimum of 420 hours, starting in Fall (week 5) and continuing in Spring (beginning before classes). Foundation year practicum starts in the second year of the part-time program. Students must take the Practicum Seminar course concurrently with their time in their first practicum at the UBSSW.
 - **Advanced Year Practicum:** Minimum of 480 hours, beginning at the start of the **Spring** semester and ending at the conclusion of the **Summer** semester.
 - Courses:
 - Practicum I – SW 550 / SW 555
 - Practicum II – SW 551 / SW 555
 - Practicum III – SW 552
 - Practicum IV – SW 553
 - **Weekly Commitment:** 15 hours per week throughout both practicums.
-

Full-Time Advanced Standing Program

- **Advanced Year Practicum:** One practicum totaling 480 hours. Students must take the Practicum Seminar course concurrently with their time in their first practicum at the UBSSW.
 - Runs during Fall and Spring semesters, beginning before classes, with a concurrent seminar course.
 - Courses:
 - Practicum III – SW 552 / SW555
 - Practicum IV – SW 553 / SW555
 - **Weekly Commitment:** 15 hours per week.
-

Part-Time Advanced Standing Program

- **Advanced Year Practicum:** Minimum of 480 hours, beginning at the start of the **Spring** semester and ending at the conclusion of the **Summer** semester. Students must take the Practicum Seminar course concurrently with their time in their first practicum at the UBSSW.
- Courses:
 - Practicum III – SW 552 / SW 555
 - Practicum IV – SW 553 / SW 555
- **Weekly Commitment:** 15 hours per week.

THE CONTENT OF PRACTICUM EDUCATION

Understanding Practicum Education Learning Objectives and Expected Outcomes

A set of Foundation Competencies (*or learning objectives*) and a set of Advanced Year Competencies (*or learning objectives*) were identified by the School of Social Work faculty in accordance with Council on Social Work Education requirements. Each individual competency has a set of component behaviors (*or expected behavioral outcomes*) associated with it. The purpose of this competency-based educational framework is as follows:

- 1) To provide an organizing framework for the practicum education experience and a guideline for developing the learning contract.
 - The competencies are the main areas of learning, i.e., learning about professional self, organization, community, developing skills in engagement, assessment, interventions, and communication.
 - The component behaviors that are listed under each competency define what is meant by the competency and serve to operationalize what students are required to master in order to be deemed competent. The component behaviors for the Foundation practicum reflect generalist, foundational learning expectations, while component behaviors for the Advanced Year articulate how competencies will be met at an advanced level.
- 2) To identify a core set of values, knowledge, skills, and cognitive and affective processes, such as critical thinking, affective reactions, and exercise of judgment, that underpins all social work practice. The competencies provide a common base, transferable across settings, population groups, and problem areas.
 - Students must meet the identified competencies regardless of whether the practicum setting focuses on interventions with individuals, families, groups, organizations, or communities. The learning activities identified will reflect the practice in each specific practicum setting. All students must develop engagement and assessment skills. A practicum that focuses on community development in an outreach project will provide a setting for the student to learn to engage and assess, even though the application of those skills may differ from those used by a student providing services in a clinical setting.

Practicum Education Learning Contract & Evaluation Form and Sonia

The School of Social Work has implemented a structured learning contract and evaluation form using Sonia, a cloud-based assessment tool designed for learning and evaluating student performance. The online tool is designed to assist practicum educators and students in the process of developing an individualized plan for learning that integrates classroom knowledge with practicum education experiences. Information about Sonia account creation is provided to students and educators via email.

Guidelines for Completing Learning Contract

In addition to competencies and component behaviors, the learning contract provides a format that allows for planning, monitoring, and evaluating the student's progress in their practicum experience. It reflects the synthesis of input from the School, the student, and the practicum educator. It is important to develop the learning contract early on, as it provides direction and the foundation of what will be expected and learned.

Please follow these basic steps for completing and utilizing the Learning Contract:

Step 1: Joint Review of Learning Objectives, Expected Outcomes, and Suggested Tasks/Activities

- The practicum educator and student jointly review the practicum education Competencies and Component behaviors.

Step 2: Assessment of Students' Learning and Available Agency Activities - When deciding upon activities, please consider the following:

- The practicum educator provides an orientation to the agency/organization and discusses with the student the learning opportunities or projects available in various agency programs.
- The contract should be **completed jointly** by the student and practicum educator based on the particular learning needs of the student and the opportunities available in the specific practicum setting.
- The student provides input on any particular areas of learning they are seeking. These may include their areas of strength as well as those areas that need further development.
- The learning needs of the student should be based on an educational assessment of the student. This assessment of individualized learning needs should include a discussion of the following:
 - 1) the student's previous academic and life experiences, including volunteer and work experience
 - 2) the student's learning style
 - 3) the student's career aspirations in the social work profession
 - 4) mutual expectations
 - 5) the educational objectives identified on the syllabi of their current courses

The student, together with the practicum educator, identifies assignments, tasks, and activities available to address the expected component behaviors under each of the required Competencies on the Learning Contract Form.

Foundation practicum

Activities/assignments identified for Foundation practicum should reflect opportunities for generalist practice.

- When site-specific activities/tasks are identified, they should be written in behavioral terms using verbs such as: read, attend, complete, present, write, interview, etc. The student and practicum educator should discuss how the student will be evaluated on these activities. Methods of evaluation should be included, as well as target dates for completion. Methods may include direct observation, process recording, audio or video recording, etc.

Step 3: Review, Signing, and Forwarding of the Learning Contract:

- The practicum educator and student agree on Learning Contract activities. The student submits these to Sonia by the date identified in the practicum education Calendar (usually by the 4th week of the practicum), and the practicum educator evaluates whether the submission “meets requirements” or “does not meet requirements”.

(Refer to the practicum education Calendar for Learning Contract submission deadlines.)

Step 4: Utilization of the Learning Contract:

- The practicum educator and student should use the learning contract as a tool throughout the practicum. The learning contract is a **working document** that guides the learning experiences and provides the basis for the student's evaluation.
- Contracts should be reviewed at regular intervals during supervision sessions to assess whether the student and practicum educator are on track with the learning process. It may be updated as needed to amend or add new learning tasks. The identified target dates should provide guidance. Completion dates should be filled in once the task is accomplished.

- Contracts should always be reviewed at the end of the first semester (mid-point of practicum) prior to completing the student Performance Evaluation.
- While the learning contract developed at the beginning of the practicum is designed to cover learning assignments throughout the entire two-semester practicum, an addendum may be developed to incorporate new areas. For example, this may involve adding additional site-specific tasks. The faculty liaison should be notified of any major changes in the contract during the practicum.

TIMESHEETS AND SONIA ([Sonia login](#))

Students are required to adhere to the schedule agreed upon at the start of the semester and review their timesheet with their practicum educator if any changes have occurred.

Students will submit timesheets, and practicum educators will approve timesheets via Sonia; accurate reporting and accounting are required. The submission of an inaccurate timesheet is considered a violation of the NASW Code of Ethics. Students who knowingly submit inaccurate hours are at risk for failure in practicum.

SUPERVISION RECORD FORM AND SONIA

Students are required to complete the Supervision Record Form following weekly supervision sessions. The form must be uploaded to Sonia just before the mid-practicum and again at the time of final evaluation. The Supervision Record form is located in Sonia.

ADDITIONAL PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

If you are interested in gaining additional practicum experience through an elective practicum credit course or an independent study, please see Appendix B.

EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

The practicum educator completes an evaluation at the midpoint and end of the practicum using the Sonia account provided to them by the School.

Performance evaluation is an ongoing process throughout the practicum and is an important component of the student's learning process. The written evaluation should not contain anything that has not already been discussed with the student, except in rare situations where an egregious incident/event has occurred. The NASW Code of Ethics notes 3.02 (b) Social workers who function as educators or practicum instructors for students should evaluate students' performance in a manner that is fair and respectful. It is not fair to the student to receive negative feedback for the first time at the end of the practicum when they haven't had a significant opportunity to address the problem areas. (As a reminder, if there are concerns about performance, please contact the faculty liaison as soon as possible.)

The *practicum Evaluation Form* is due at mid-practicum and at the end of the practicum. Mid-practicum evaluations are essential for providing feedback on progress and outlining areas that need continued improvement.

The evaluation outlines the student's performance: 1) related to each program competency and its associated component behaviors; 2) each identified practicum activity; and 3) the submission of accurate time sheets, supervision record forms, and other documentation, including the student's comments and self-reflection submission. Evaluation should be based on a review of the learning contract and on consideration of a student's progress in the agreed-upon areas of skill development, as well as the knowledge, values, skills, cognitive and affective processes, and behaviors associated with professional competence.

At the end of the first semester (Mid-practicum Evaluation), if a student earns a rating of IP (Insufficient Progress) or UP (Unacceptable Progress) in one or two outcome areas, or if there are any concerns about

performance, it is expected that a plan for improvement be developed. The faculty liaison meets with the student and practicum educator to create a Student Development Plan and to establish a timeframe for improvement. The Student Development Plan will be added to the learning contract. (See section on Student Development Plans.)

At the end of the first semester, if a student earns a rating of IP or UP in a majority of outcome areas, or if there are significant concerns about a student's performance or appropriateness for the profession, it is an indication that it is unlikely that they have the basic skills to move forward successfully. Therefore, a grade of "U" should be recommended. If a "U" grade is assigned, please refer to the "Practicum Status Review Process" Policy and Procedure (Appendix G).

Completion of the evaluation is of great importance. The practicum educator completes the evaluation. The practicum educator reviews the evaluation with the student, discussing areas of strength and areas for improvement. The online evaluation form should be completed by the practicum educator in Sonia by the identified due date each semester during practicum. (Refer to the [practicum education Calendar](#) for mid-practicum and final evaluation deadlines.)

Please notify the faculty liaison as soon as possible if there is any reason that the *practicum Learning Contract Evaluation Form* will not be submitted by the due date.

Levels of Performance (Also see Grading Procedures & Requirements)

Expert Level of Performance / Advanced Competence or AC

Some students may perform above the acceptable level of performance, displaying creativity, flexibility, and imagination, reflecting a potential to perform at a superior level. A rating of AC indicates that the student **expertly demonstrates awareness, knowledge, and skills as a graduate social work intern.** A rating of AC is likely to occur infrequently and, as such, should be accompanied by a supporting rationale.

Competence or C

A student should attain a rating of C on a majority of the nine program competencies/objectives by the end of the practicum course in order to receive a grade of S (or Satisfactory). A rating of C indicates that the student is able to satisfactorily perform the set of component behaviors associated with a given competency and consistently demonstrates awareness, knowledge, and skills as a graduate social work intern.

Emerging Competence or EC

While there may be periods of unevenness (with some limited degree of regression or immobilization, mainly at points of stress or pressure), the student gives evidence of both the motivation and capacity to perform satisfactorily the set of component behaviors associated with a given competency. Ratings of EC in a *majority* of competencies at the *end of practicum* could indicate Insufficient Progress or Unacceptable Performance. See the section on Performance Concerns, which follows. **(Students should receive a rating of C or above on a majority of the competencies in order to receive a grade of S at the end of the practicum course.)**

Insufficient Progress (IP)

The student **rarely demonstrates** awareness, knowledge, and skills related to a particular competence. **Please refer also to the section below, "Performance Concerns (Ratings of IP and UP)".**

It is important for practicum educators to give accurate feedback. If a student's performance is unacceptable or clearly needs improvement in order to meet the basic standards of performance, it is important to reflect this in the evaluation. If a student earns a rating of "Insufficient Progress" in any outcome area, the practicum educator should document example(s) that substantiate that rating.

Unacceptable Level of Performance (UP)

The student **never demonstrates** awareness, knowledge, and skills related to a particular competence. **Please refer also to the section below, “Performance Concerns (Ratings of IP and UP)”.**

It is important for practicum educators to give accurate feedback. If a student’s performance is unacceptable or clearly needs improvement in order to meet the basic standards of performance, it is important to reflect this in the evaluation. If a student earns a rating of “Unacceptable Progress” in any outcome area, the practicum educator should document example(s) that substantiate that rating.

Performance Concerns (Ratings of IP and UP)

When assigning ratings, it is important to consider whether the student’s overall performance is uneven or slow. Difficulties in the following areas suggest ratings of IP (rarely demonstrates related skills) or UP (never demonstrates related skills):

- Inability to establish relationships at the basic level due to lack of sensitivity and feeling for people, as well as difficulty disciplining his/her own feelings and responses.
- Preoccupation with own needs and feelings.
- Lack of follow-through
- Issues related to time and attendance
- Lack of showing initiative
- Inability to do case planning.
- Persistent problem viewing client systems objectively with overemphasis on either positive or negative aspects of a situation.
- Inability to be self-reflective.
- Limited ability to conceptualize.
- Behavior in a supervisory relationship indicates a limited ability to involve oneself in the learning process and a high degree of defensiveness. Frequent need for external controls and propulsion for learning.
- Evidence of a lack of personal integrity throughout performance.

Unacceptable Performance

Any one of the following characteristics would automatically indicate that a student is failing, and ratings of UP would be expected. Normally, you would not expect to find only one of these characteristics in isolation, but rather in combination with others. The student demonstrates:

- Consistent lack of empathy and unrelatedness to the individual/family/group/organization/community.
- Evidence of destructiveness with clients.
- Inability to think independently.
- Preoccupation with own needs and feelings, negating effective use of self as a helping person.

- Hostile behavior when given constructive criticism.
- Inability to relate the goals and values of the social work profession to one's own behavior and social work practice. Confusion in role and identification as a social worker.
- Evidence of disorganization in responding to the basic demands for use of time, in the learning situation, in submitting recordings, and/or setting up appointments. No reference to theoretical concepts about behavior or no ability to begin to implement the beginning aspects of the treatment process, including concepts of social study, assessment, and evaluation, as derived from class, practicum teaching, and readings.
- Complete inability to conceptualize or to recognize principles.
- Inaccessibility to learning in the use of the supervisory process, as evidenced by the inability to look at one's own performance in a self-evaluative manner. High degree of self-protectiveness requires a high degree of pressure to function and to meet deadlines, unrealistic perception of self, unrealistic expectations of others, motivation to learn only to "get through", or a need to control all in his/her learning.
- Evidence of lack of personal integrity in performance with individual/family/group/organization/community, or in relationship with practicum educator. Does not adhere to the professional Code of Ethics.
- Persistent problems with attendance and/or tardiness.

Student Development Plans

If someone is performing at a level of IP or UP, or there are concerns about performance, a student development plan should be put in place by the faculty liaison, in conjunction with the practicum educator and practicum education Office.

The purpose of the Student Development Plan is to assist students who have experienced challenges in meeting one or more of the required competencies to date. Students are more likely to succeed in their practicum when they receive clear and concise feedback on what needs to change. Educational tools may be specified, and a schedule for review of specific performance goals may be outlined.

GRADING PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS (ALSO SEE LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE)

The practicum educator, using Sonia, evaluates practicum performance. Grades are assigned by the practicum Office in consultation with the faculty liaison based on evaluative information from the practicum educator.

Sonia provides a rating scale ranging from "UP/ Unacceptable Progress" to "AC/ Advanced Competency" for each performance objective. The actual grade options for practicum education courses are pass/fail: "S" (Satisfactory) or "U" (Unsatisfactory). The "S" grade in practicum is awarded when a student's letter grade would have been equivalent to a "B-" or better.

It is important for practicum educators to give accurate feedback. If a student's performance is unacceptable or clearly needs improvement in order to meet the basic standards of performance, it is important to reflect this in the evaluation. If a student earns a rating of "Insufficient Progress" or "Unacceptable Progress" in any outcome area, the practicum educator should document example(s) that substantiate that rating.

The practicum educator should contact the faculty liaison *as soon as possible* if they believe they will recommend a failing grade to the faculty liaison.

The *practicum Learning Contract Evaluation Form* should be signed and completed by Sonia by both the student and the practicum educator by the due date identified on the practicum education calendar. Late evaluations could result in the student receiving an “incomplete” grade.

Grading and Requirements for the Foundation Practicum Practicum I (SW 550) & II (SW 551)

- Students must complete the entire year of practicum in order to receive a final grade of “S”.
- **A student should attain a rating of “C” (Competence) on a majority of the nine program competencies/objectives by the end of the practicum course in order to receive a grade of S (or satisfactory).**

After completion of SW 550 (practicum I), students will generally receive an “L” grade (meaning work continuing) if they have demonstrated emerging competence or better in a sufficient number of outcome areas during the first semester. This “L” grade will only be converted to an “S” (satisfactory) grade upon successful completion of SW 551 (practicum II).

- A student who received an "L" grade at the end of SW 550 (practicum I) is able to continue in SW551 (practicum II). If the student then does not successfully complete SW 551 (practicum II), the "L" grade for SW 550 (practicum I) will be converted to a "U" grade.
- Students who do not receive a satisfactory evaluation at the completion of SW 550 (practicum I) will receive a “U” (unsatisfactory) at that time and will not be permitted to continue in SW 551 (practicum II).
- Students who receive a “U” (unsatisfactory) grade will be reviewed by the practicum education department staff and the MSW Director to determine whether the student will be eligible to continue in the MSW program and have the option to repeat practicum. Please refer to the “practicum Status Review Process” Policy and Procedure in Appendix G for further details.
- Any student who withdraws from practicum without following the official process will receive a grade of U in practicum for the semester and will be withdrawn from their concurrent courses. See Termination of practicum.
- If students take a leave of absence during the academic year, they will receive an “N” grade in practicum and must re-register for and repeat practicum if they return to the MSW program. Students who fail practicum will receive a “U” grade and must re-register for and repeat practicum. All practicums are a year in length (unless other arrangements have been made, i.e., block practicum). Any student who takes a leave of absence prior to completing the second term (SW 551 or SW 553/) will need to register for and repeat both terms (SW 550 & 551/ Foundation or SW 552 & 553 Advanced) when they re-enter the program. In other words, none of the previously completed practicum hours can be carried over to the next practicum experience. If a student does not return to complete SW 550 and SW 551, the “L” will convert to a “U”.

Grading/Requirements for Interventions I (SW 520) and Theories of Human Behavior and Development (SW 505) as they relate to practicum

The knowledge and skills learned in the Interventions I (SW 520) and Theories of Human Behavior and Development (SW 505) courses are essential to social work practice in the practicum. Therefore, students who receive a grade below “B-“ in SW 520 or in SW 505 will not be able to continue on in SW 551 (practicum II) even if they have performed satisfactorily in SW 550 (practicum I). The student will need to wait until the following academic year to repeat both SW 520 (Interventions I) and SW550 (Practicum I) or SW505 (Theories of Human Behavior and Development) and SW550. None of the previously completed practicum hours can be carried over to the next practicum experience. This may require taking a leave of absence from the program.

Grading and Requirements for the Advanced Year practicum Practicum III (SW 552) & IV (SW 553)

- Students must complete the entire year of practicum in order to receive a grade of “S”.

After completing SW 552 (practicum III), students will generally receive an “L” grade (meaning work continuing). This “L” grade will only be converted to an “S” (satisfactory) grade upon successful completion of SW 553 (practicum IV). Students that demonstrated emerging competence or better in a sufficient number of outcome areas during the first semester of their practicum are given an “L” grade to indicate continuation of their practicum.

- A student who received an "L" grade at the end of SW 552 (practicum III) who then does not successfully complete SW 553 (practicum IV) will have the "L" grade for SW 552 (practicum III) converted to a "U" grade.
- Students who do not receive a satisfactory evaluation at the completion of SW 552 (practicum III) will receive a “U” (unsatisfactory) at that time and will not be permitted to continue in SW 553 (practicum IV).
- Students who receive a “U” (unsatisfactory) grade for SW 552 or SW 553 will be reviewed by the practicum education department staff and the MSW Director to determine whether the student will have the option to repeat practicum. Please refer to the “practicum Status Review Process” Policy and Procedure in Appendix G for further details.
- Any student who withdraws from practicum without following the official process will receive a grade of U in practicum for the semester and will be withdrawn from their concurrent courses.

Incomplete Grades

A grade of “Incomplete” (I) may be given in those instances in which the student has not been able to complete all the required tasks or practicum hours due to illness or other unforeseeable and compelling circumstances. “Incomplete” is not available to students who have not satisfactorily completed the academic requirements for a course, including practicum.

If an “I” is given, a letter grade must be assigned as stated in the Student Development Plan or after no more than two additional semesters plus the intervening summer as established by the academic calendar, whichever is sooner. If the course requirements are not completed by that date, the “Incomplete” will automatically be changed to an “Unsatisfactory” (U) grade.

The faculty liaison, in conjunction with the practicum educator, may set their own conditions for removing an “Incomplete” as long as the time limit is no longer than the time limit specified in the paragraph above. The Director of practicum education should be informed of any plans to extend the practicum beyond the normal schedule for completion.

No student may register for courses in the Advanced Year curriculum with an Incomplete in a required foundation-level course, including SW 550 (practicum I) and 551 (practicum II).

ATTENDANCE AT PRACTICUM

practicum education is an important part of the Social Work curriculum. The practicum course provides students with an opportunity to integrate and apply their social work knowledge and skills. To maximize learning, students are expected to: 1) attend practicum according to the schedule established with the practicum educator at the start of practicum; 2) arrive on time; 3) stay for the full duration of each scheduled day; 4) complete practicum hour “shifts” that are a minimum of 3 hours and no more than 10 (unless approval received from faculty liaison); and 5) be available when there are educationally meaningful opportunities available per the Learning Contract.

In order to graduate from the MSW Program, students must complete the required number of practicum hours identified by the School of Social Work based on minimum standards set by the Council on Social Work Education. (See “*Structure of practicum*”)

Participation in practicum activities is expected, and other coursework should not be completed during practicum hours unless prior authorization is received from the practicum educator in conjunction with the faculty liaison.

Because the practicum days outlined in the practicum education Calendar are generally scheduled to meet the minimum requirements, students who need to take sick days during their practicum must make arrangements with their practicum educator to make up the time they have missed. Students are required to complete timesheets in Sonia that reflect the hours completed.

Some agencies require that students be available for more than the school’s minimum required hours in order to gain the maximum benefit from the experience. If the agency has such a requirement, this should be stated at the time of the student’s pre-practicum interview. Once a student accepts a practicum, they are expected to fulfill the hours agreed upon.

Consistent with UB policy, absence may be considered when determining a final grade. A grade of “U” or unsuccessful may be applied where: 1) students miss three or more days of scheduled practicum hours (22.5 hours) in a given semester; and 2) these absences are not deemed *justifiable*.

Justifiable absences include the following: 1) religious observances; 2) illness documented by a physician or other appropriate health care professional; 3) conflicts with university-sanctioned activities documented by an appropriate university administrator; 4) public emergencies; and 5) documented personal or family emergencies. The student is responsible for notifying the practicum educator in writing with as much advance notice as possible.

Students are responsible for *promptly* making up the missed hours. Make-up hours must be approved by both the practicum educator and liaison. All missed hours must be made up by the student in that semester. There are NO exceptions. A make-up schedule is based on the availability of substantive learning experiences as deemed appropriate by the practicum educator. Students cannot simply “put in time”.

Important Note – practicums Begin Before Classes Start (Spring Semester)
Students and practicum educators should note that students who are completing a Fall through Spring semester practicum are expected to return to the practicum prior to the start of classes (late December or early January). (Please refer to your <i>practicum education Calendar</i> for the exact date.) Part-time students who begin their Advanced Year practicum in the Spring semester also begin at this time in order to ensure the completion of the required number of practicum hours to earn a September Diploma.

Holidays and Vacation

Students are not expected to be in practicums on UB's officially scheduled holidays. Students should follow the practicum education Calendar, which reflects holiday and vacation time. As noted previously, vacations between semesters are shorter for practicum education than for the regular academic calendar. Students are expected to be professionally responsible in planning with practicum educators to meet client needs during periods of absence.

Policy on Religious Holidays

The following is policy through the State University system. “On those religious holidays when members of a faith typically observe the expectation of church or synagogue that they be absent from school or work, campuses will avoid the scheduling of such events as registration, the first day of classes, or student convocations, and individual students will be excused from class without penalty if expressly requested.” (From

SUNY Policy Handbook, 1975, Section No. 091.3) At this university, if such a requested absence results in a student's inability to fulfill the practicum education requirements on that particular day, the student should have an opportunity to make up the required practicum hours without penalty.

Unscheduled University Closing

When there is an unscheduled university closing, students must exercise individual judgment with consideration given to their professional responsibility to clients and agencies, the physical danger to themselves, and distance to be traveled. Any decision not to report to the agency must be handled in a manner that shows appropriate regard for professional standards. During the initial orientation period to the practicum agency, students and practicum educators should discuss the proper protocol to follow.

If a student reports to the agency and that agency closes early, the student is credited with only the number of hours worked. If the student does not report due to a snow day or other circumstance, the student must make up the missed time. Any compensatory time earned by the student may be used to make up time lost due to a storm emergency, agency holiday, etc. (*See below for Compensatory Time policy.*) Each student is responsible for planning with his/her practicum educator to make up lost time so that he/she meet the hours required.

Compensatory Time

Students are expected to be at their practicum during the regular hours of the agency. Any extended amount of time in practicum beyond the normal requirement of 15 hours per week is considered overtime, and compensatory time off is permitted. Any compensatory time for students requires prior approval from the practicum educator and liaison. The plan for taking the time also requires approval from the practicum educator and liaison. Time off should be taken within two weeks of when it is earned through a planned adjustment in the student's internship hours. Students are not encouraged to be at their practicum during the semester break identified on the practicum calendar more than is necessary to responsibly serve their clients. **Time earned during any semester break is to be used during the course of the semester and may not be accumulated and taken as a block at the semester end.** Students should remain in practicum throughout the entire scheduled two-semester practicum period in order to experience the accumulation of learning over time – unless prior approval has been granted.

Conference Attendance

Attendance at social work conferences, institutes, and meetings can contribute in a meaningful way to the professional growth of students. Attendance at such conferences, etc., on practicum education days must be planned in advance and approved by the practicum educator. In instances where the School requests that students be released from practicum time to participate in meetings or special events, adequate notice will be provided. Students will be expected to be professionally accountable for meeting service responsibilities, rescheduling appointments, etc.

Extension of practicum

In those unusual circumstances where an extension of the practicum is viewed as educationally desirable, a plan for an additional period in the practicum will be made by the School in collaboration with the agency director, practicum educator, faculty liaison, and student. Such a plan will include a carefully articulated set of learning goals against which the student's work will be evaluated and determined successful. Any plan for a practicum extension requires prior approval from the Director of practicum education.

Student Withdrawal from practicum Related to Program Withdrawal, Leave of Absence, and When Required Due to Course Failure

This decision to withdraw from practicum should be made only after consultation with and approval from the faculty liaison and the practicum Office, and is permitted only for the following reasons: 1) program withdrawal or leave of absence; and, 2) failure in foundation courses (SW 505 and SW 520)

that prevent students from proceeding with practicum. Because there are implications for a student's course sequence, Student Services staff should also be consulted prior to course withdrawal.

In these cases, students are expected to professionally exit from their practicum agency in a timely manner. Students should:

- Contact their faculty liaison to make sure they are aware of the situation.
- Meet with their practicum educator to explain that they are unable to continue. They should work with their practicum educator to develop a plan for termination, which may include terminating with clients, returning keys or pass tokens, and making sure record keeping is up to date.
- Follow up with your faculty liaison and the practicum Department in an email confirming they have been professionally terminated from your practicum.

Any student who withdraws from practicum without following this process will receive a grade of U in practicum for the semester and will be withdrawn from their concurrent courses. Students with a "U" grade in practicum must undergo a practicum status review process. Please refer to the "Practicum Status Review Process" Policy and Procedure in the Appendix for further details.

See also, "Termination of practicum"

RETENTION POLICY

All students are required to maintain a cumulative "B" (3.0) grade point average and have a 3.0 GPA or better upon graduation from the School. Students who drop below a cumulative 3.0 GPA will be on academic warning during the following semester. If the student does not raise his or her cumulative GPA to 3.0 after 11 graded credits of subsequent social work courses, he or she will be dismissed from the School. "S" and "U" grades do not affect GPA.

In foundation courses and in all required Advanced Year courses, a minimum of "B-" will be required of all students in order for them to be eligible for graduation. Required courses with a grade below "B-" and practicum courses with a "U" grade may only be repeated once. Students with a "U" grade in practicum must be reviewed by the practicum education department staff and the MSW Director to determine eligibility to repeat a practicum course (see "practicum Status Review Process" Policy and Procedure in Appendix G). A grade lower than a "B-" in a required foundation or Advanced Year course will prevent a student from enrolling in sequential courses in practicum or in Advanced Year courses.

All students are required to adhere to the criteria stated in the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers. A violation of this code may result in dismissal from the School.

TERMINATION OF PRACTICUM

Students should know that the practicum educator has the right at any point in the practicum to request immediate removal of the student from the practicum site if they deem that the student's continued presence is not in the practicum site's best interest, i.e., for reasons of health, performance, or other reasons. However, the termination of a student's practicum by a practicum educator is a serious decision. If a practicum educator has a concern regarding a student's performance in practicum, they are encouraged to speak to them directly. They should also call upon the faculty liaison for assistance and support in resolving the matter. The faculty liaisons may recommend that a Student Development Plan (SDP) be implemented. The SDP outlines any strengths, and delineates performance expectations. Helpful strategies to support the learning and professional behavior are also included.

Termination from practicum will prompt a review process. Please refer to the "Practicum Status Review" Policy and Procedure in Appendix G for further details.

Students are encouraged to speak directly to their practicum educator about any concerns they may have about their practicum. Often, this is all that is necessary to resolve a problem. If a concern is not resolved in this manner, students should consult with the assigned faculty liaison. The faculty liaison is available to assist in informal mediation of any problems involving a student's practicum. If there is a need for further intervention beyond that of the faculty liaison in order to resolve a concern, the Practicum Education Department should be consulted.

Students are required to participate in attempts to problem-solve issues in practicum, including any plans for corrective action. The ability to have difficult conversations is a necessary social work skill, and social work practice frequently involves confronting uncomfortable issues. Having difficult conversations in practicum can allow for progress in this area and help new social workers become more confident and self-aware.

If a student is terminated from practicum, they are expected to exit professionally. Any student who withdraws from practicum without following the process described will receive a grade of U in practicum for the semester and will be withdrawn from any concurrent courses. Students with a "U" grade in practicum must undergo a practicum status review process. Please refer to the "Practicum Status Review Process" Policy and Procedure in the Appendix for further details.

See also, "Student Withdrawal from Practicum Related to Program Withdrawal, Leave of Absence, and When Required Due to Course Failure".

QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION

The School of Social Work Practicum Education Department and the on-site agency practicum educators work hard to ensure that students receive high-quality instruction in all their practicums. However, despite our best efforts at identifying and maintaining quality practicum sites, problems may arise during a practicum. In this case, students are encouraged to speak directly to the practicum educator about their concerns; often, this is all that is necessary to resolve a problem. If a concern is not resolved in this manner, students should consult with the assigned faculty liaison regarding any concerns they may have. The faculty liaison is available to assist in informal mediation of any problems involving a student's practicum. If there is a need for further intervention beyond that of the faculty liaison in order to resolve a concern, the practicum education Department staff should be consulted.

Similarly, if a practicum educator has a concern with a student's performance in practicum, they should first speak to the student about their concern. Hopefully, this will resolve the issue. If it does not, the practicum educator should call upon the faculty liaison for assistance in resolving the matter. Again, if there is a need for additional assistance in resolving a concern, the practicum education Department staff should be consulted.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES AND COMMITTEE ON STUDENTS

Student Grievance against a Faculty/Staff Member or a practicum educator.¹

A grievance can be brought to The Committee on Students (COS) when a student feels that he/she has not received fair treatment because of unfair, inequitable, or discriminatory treatment by a school of social work faculty/staff member or practicum educator. Reviews are to be conducted in confidence and without publicity, and all members of the School will be expected to cooperate with the Committee on Students as it seeks information. The committee will have the prerogative to determine if it chooses to refer such claims or grievances to other bodies within the University for review. All persons involved in the process will be expected to adhere to strict rules of confidentiality.

The chair and members of COS are designated by the bylaws of the School. If student members are present, they can participate in the committee's discussion and can vote on the final decision. In cases where a committee member (faculty, staff-, or another student) is directly involved in the grievance and is determined to

¹ practicum Liaisons are members of either full-time or adjunct faculty.

have conflicting interests, he/she will be excused from serving. The student or faculty member may be replaced at the discretion of the chair or the Dean.

The Committee on Students is empowered to assess a grievance and make decisions in cases where students believe one or more of the following:

- (a) They have been subject to a violation, misinterpretation, or inequitable application of any of the regulations of the University, the Graduate School, the School of Social Work, or the NASW;
- (b) They have been unfairly or inequitably treated by reason of any act or condition contrary to established policy or practice governing or affecting graduate students;
- (c) They have been discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, or sexual orientation by a school faculty/staff member or practicum educator.

In cases where the committee finds proof of unfair, inequitable, or discriminatory treatment, it will make recommendations to the dean for appropriate action.

Grievance Procedures

In cases where a student believes that she or he has received unfair, inequitable, or discriminatory treatment as described above, the student may initiate a grievance process by expressing her or his intent to open the process. The request must be made in writing to the COS chair within one year of the alleged occurrence. This time limit may be extended by the Dean of the School of Social Work upon good cause. The student is required to send a copy of the letter of such intent to the school faculty/staff member or practicum educator who is the subject of the potential grievance. The Student Handbook must be consulted regarding procedure.

STUDENT VIOLATION OF ETHICAL STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR

The Committee on Students will determine the status of all students suspected of violating the NASW Code of Ethics or University standards of behavior. The committee will address breaches in standards, including violations of academic or professional behavior and norms. These standards include, but are not limited to, instances of plagiarizing, cheating, failing to report abuse, engaging in criminal action, dishonesty, or posing serious danger to the welfare of clients. In cases where the committee determines violations have occurred, it will make recommendations to the dean for appropriate action. The Student Handbook should be consulted for related procedures.

University Grievance Process

After attempting to resolve a problem through COS, a student may file a grievance through the Graduate School. For procedures, start at www.buffalo.edu and then search for UB Graduate School > Policies & Procedures > Academic Grievance Policies and Procedures. [Use this link.](#)

PRACTICUM PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

The practicum Department team will identify potential practicums based on the written practicum application submitted by students, which includes interest areas, past experiences, geography, etc. Although the School will try to honor student's needs and preferences, the School is unable to guarantee specific arrangements to accommodate all student preferences. Students are matched with agencies based upon the agencies' potential to expose students to diverse populations, social issues, and a broad spectrum of social work services.

The major objective in the practicum process is the matching of student educational needs with a practicum education, which offers opportunities judged to have the best potential for promoting the student's professional development. The School will consider personal factors related to the location of practicums, but the primary concern is the practicum of the student in a setting judged to have the best potential for promoting the student's professional development.

Review of Students Who Submit practicum Applications Late (Beyond Due Date) or Fail to Respond to practicum Office Communications Regarding practicum

Students not submitting a practicum application prior to the deadline date (listed on student calendar) may forfeit practicum and have to defer by one or more semesters. Delays could result in a recommendation for a Status Review. As in professional practice, the timely submission of paperwork is an essential skill.

Students who fail to respond to frequent email or phone communications from the practicum office regarding practicum may have holds placed on their accounts by the Registrar's Office and risk delaying their advancement in the MSW program. In some cases, a Status Review may be recommended. It is expected that students will be monitoring their UB Email. See the practicum Process section below for related deadlines.

PRACTICUM INTERVIEW

Once the potential agency is identified for the student, the student must complete a professional practicum interview with an agency supervisor to determine his or her acceptability for the practicum. Students not accepted by the assigned agency due to non-agency issues may need to meet with the practicum office staff to re-evaluate practicum status, and may be required to seek the assistance of career services available to all UB students. Students will be given reasons for non-acceptance. Once a student accepts a practicum offer from an agency, it is considered a professional obligation that is made. It is expected that students will honor the original commitment made by accepting the practicum. No additional outreach or practicum efforts should be made once a student is confirmed with a practicum.

REASONABLE COMMUTE TO PRACTICUM

Students are required to arrange transportation to and from their practicum. While practicum coordinators will make every effort to arrange for a practicum that is close to the student's residence, this cannot be guaranteed, and students may be required to drive their own vehicle up to 30-40 minutes each way to their site. If a student is relying on public transportation, the commute to and from the practicum may take longer.

POLICY ON UNSUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWS

Interviewing at a practicum site does not guarantee that students will be selected. The decision of a practicum site to not accept a student for practicum may occur for one of the following reasons:

1. Student is not selected for interview or practicum: This may occur if there are multiple students interviewing for a limited number of practicum opportunities or if the practicum agency determines that the student is "not a good fit" for reasons other than behavioral/professional presentation.
2. Student had an unsuccessful interview: An interview is considered "unsuccessful" if the practicum site determines that there are examples of problematic or unprofessional behavior, attire, and/or communication.

After the first unsuccessful interview, a meeting will be scheduled with your practicum coordinator to review constructive feedback and provide coaching and resources. When students experience two "unsuccessful" practicum interviews, a review meeting will be scheduled to determine whether the student will be allowed to interview at another practicum site (see Appendix H).

See "Review of Students Who Experience Two Unsuccessful practicum Interviews".

ADMISSION REQUIREMENT FOR PRACTICUM

The goal of the practicum office is to provide the highest quality practicum education experience for all students. The practicum Department will only admit those students who meet the following criteria:

1. Student completes a practicum interview and is accepted by the agency
2. Student submits the online Student Acknowledgment, which includes the following: a) HIPAA signature page; b) Ethics Pledge; c) practicum Handbook Review/ Student Roles and Responsibilities.
3. Student meets the established UBSSW Technical Standards that focus on academic performance as well as the abilities and attributes essential for the profession. See [Technical Standards](#)

PRACTICUM PROCESS

Full-time foundation students submit practicum applications within two weeks of receiving registration materials from the School. Part-time foundation students submit applications in the Fall semester of their first year. Timely submission of documents is essential, as staff cannot link students with practicum experiences until all documentation is received. Delayed submissions may disrupt the placement process and possibly result in a student not receiving a placement.

Practicums for foundation year students are assigned based on the information provided in their practicum application, with a focus on a generalist practicum experience. The practicum education staff matches students with agencies to provide the most appropriate educational experience based on several factors, including the student's prior professional experience and placement availability. Foundation year students do not get to select their practicum experience.

After students have submitted their practicum applications, staff will link them with a practicum site for an interview. Students will be notified of their interview details via their **UB email address**. In the email, the student will be provided with the name of the practicum site and the contact information of the interviewer. Students are responsible for promptly contacting the interviewer to schedule a meeting, as staff will not do this on the students behalf. Delays in scheduling an interview may result in the practicum site declining a placement offer.

Provided the interview is successful and the site offers the student a placement, students will accept the offer and provide an update in Sonia. In the event that a student is mistreated in any way during the interview process, or if a conflict of interest arises (for example, a student learns that a family member receives services from the site), the student should immediately inform practicum education staff to discuss next steps. Students are not permitted to decline a placement offer merely because they would prefer a different experience.

For Advanced Year practicums (in the seated MSW program), students have an opportunity to indicate their preferred areas of practice as well as identify agencies where they would like to be considered for practicum.

Students need to be aware that some practicum agencies have additional screening procedures. Students are expected to pay the cost of screening, unless the agency covers the cost. Students may be asked to complete additional application forms or interviews. Child Abuse Registry, drug screenings, and criminal background checks may also be required by some agencies. Hospital settings will require additional health documentation.

Agencies are encouraged to provide students with additional written information that may be helpful to prepare them for the practicum. If an agency requests a student to attend an orientation prior to the start of the practicum, this should be discussed during the interview.

Practicum in some geographic regions may not be possible as the start of the academic year nears. The Rochester region is one example in which practicums need to be secured early on. In some cases, the practicum Coordinator in those regions may refer students to the Buffalo area for practicum.

While practicum faculty and staff make every effort to secure practicums for students, delayed submission of required materials by students and/or non-responsiveness of students to practicum communications may result in students not being placed in a given academic year. Deadlines are in place because of the significant time required to establish formal affiliations with new practicum agencies, and the competition for practicums, particularly in certain geographic regions, as the start of the academic year approaches. The deadline dates below reflect the final date by which students will be allowed to proceed with practicum, where non-responsiveness and non-submission of practicum materials are a concern. Practicums cannot be guaranteed when students are late in submitting materials or are non-responsive to practicum communications.

REQUEST TO CHANGE PROGRAM STATUS -IMPACT ON PRACTICUM PROCESS

Students must follow the practicum sequence associated with their program of record. Students requesting an altered practicum sequence should consult the Student Handbook for information on changing program status.

INTERNATIONAL, OUT OF REGION, AND REGIONAL IMMERSION (“BLOCK”) PRACTICUMS - ADVANCED YEAR ONLY

Students interested in international opportunities can visit the SSW web section entitled “[*Academics/International Opportunities*](#).” The SSW curriculum allows for “block” or immersion practicum (in which 480 hours are completed in one semester) in the final Spring or Summer of a student’s program. Students wishing to request approval to pursue an immersion practicum in their *Advanced Year* must do so prior to the deadline for submitting their Advanced Year practicum application. This timeframe is reflective of the significant time required to secure legal affiliation and ensure that the SSW program requirements will be met.

A practicum must be included in one of the following categories to be considered for an immersion (“block”) practicum: *Note that any student completing employment-based practicum work is not eligible for “block” practicum.

- 1) Seated students who are seeking an out-of-region / Out-of-state practicum
- 2) Seated or online students seeking International
- 3) Regional immersion “block” practicum- ONLY considered under pre-planned, exceptional circumstances, and discussed with an assigned practicum Coordinator.

Eligibility

The Director of practicum education must assess and approve all “block” practicum options prior to consideration of a particular agency/region. A student must be in good standing and not involved in a process of review. Due to the greater demands placed on students in an immersion practicum, recommendation forms are required, and excellence should be exemplified in all areas of a student’s program, i.e., attendance and practicum performance.

Please note that seated students should not approach agencies directly to request “block” practicums.

Students who are interested in requesting Out-of-Region and International practicums should review the procedures outlined on the School of [Social Work website](#).

CHANGE OF CONTACT INFORMATION (ADDRESS, PHONE, EMAIL, ETC.)

Practicum educators are asked to notify the practicum education Department of any change in address, phone number, or other contact information.

Students are asked to notify the Main Office for the School of Social Work at 716-545-3381 or sw-info@buffalo.edu of any change in address, phone number, or other contact information. Students also need to contact the Student Response Center at 716-645-2450 to update their information.

Reasonable Accommodations for students with disabilities

Students may receive additional supports and reasonable accommodations if they have a documented disability. If a student wishes to pursue practicum accommodations, they should schedule a consultation meeting with a representative from the Office of Accessibility Resources. The Office has two physical locations: 60 Capen Hall on North Campus and 1 Diefendorf Hall on South Campus. Students may also meet with Accessibility Resources staff over the phone or online. More information can be found on their [website](#).

Students who may need an accommodation for their practicum experience should identify this need on their Practicum Application form in Sonia.

To receive reasonable accommodations for practicum, students must provide an Accommodations Memo that is specific to the Practicum course. Accommodation Memos should be submitted to the Practicum Office via email at sw-practicum@buffalo.edu. Once presented with an Accommodation Memo, a practicum coordinator will work with students to identify an appropriate practicum site for an interview.

EMPLOYMENT-BASED PRACTICUM OPTIONS

An employment-based practicum option is available for students who are currently employed in a social service agency. The employment-based proposal must meet a clear set of educational criteria (stated below) for review and approval by the practicum education Department. Students who are interested in this option indicate so on their practicum acknowledgment and proceed with the following steps.

EMPLOYMENT BASED PRACTICUM CRITERIA

The following criteria must be met for the student to be approved for an employment-based practicum. Please note that many agencies have different policies regarding employment-based practicums. Before pursuing an employment-based practicum, students should consult with their employer about employment-practicum policies and procedures.

Students must be in good standing and not involved in a review process.

Students who have been terminated from a previous practicum are not eligible for an employment-based practicum because our priority is ensuring that their next practicum provides a structured, learning-focused experience dedicated fully to student development. Employment-based practicums introduce additional complexities, such as challenges with role clarity and boundaries, that can distract from the goal of building students' social work competencies. These practicums are not guaranteed and require thorough vetting of both the site and the student to ensure they meet rigorous standards and uphold clear boundaries. When a student has experienced difficulties in a prior practicum, it is essential that their next practicum removes these additional stressors and focuses solely on their growth. The policy is in place to support students in meeting the required social work competencies, and a traditional practicum setting is the most appropriate and reliable structure to help them do so.

The practicum must allow the student to participate in activities directly linked to the nine social work competencies (below). This may or may not be in the same setting as the student's current work.

The current best practice is for students to have separate and unique work and practicum responsibilities.

If this is not possible, and regular work duties are requested to count as practicum, the student must also propose supplemental learning opportunities beyond work duties. If students use any of their regular work hours to count as practicum, they must complete a Capstone Project (description below). If their work and practicum duties/hours are separate, they do not need to complete a Capstone project.

The student must have been employed by the practicum work site for a minimum of 60 days prior to submitting an employment-based practicum proposal.

The student may only count 15 hours per week for practicum hours. If, for unforeseen circumstances, a student has fallen behind on practicum hours, they may submit a request to count more than 15 hours per week. The student will be asked to convey how the additional hours enhance the student's learning, i.e., a student who is counting their job as practicum will not be permitted to count more than 15 hours per week unless they are able to describe new learning experiences beyond their regular work duties. The student should submit the request to their faculty liaison.

Students are permitted to complete two employment-based practicums if they choose. When a student proposes a second employment-based practicum, they will be asked additional questions in the employment-based application. Specifically, the student will be asked to explain how the practicum will be different from the foundation year and how it will allow them to deepen their learning, skills, and competency development. They will also be asked to describe the new role or responsibility that they are taking on at their job. Last, students must seek approval from their faculty liaison on their plan.

A practicum educator is defined as an individual with a Master's in Social Work (MSW) from a CSWE-accredited program. The practicum educator should be licensed in NYS with an LMSW or LCSW. Please note: if the practicum is in an agency/program that is exempt according to current NYS law (an exempt agency is one

that has a NYS operating certificate from any of the following agencies: OMH, OMRDD, OCFS, or OASAS), then the practicum educator may not need to be licensed in NYS.

The practicum educator must agree to provide a social work perspective to the student's practicum education experience. The practicum educator must agree to allow the student the space and permission to be a learner. In other words, the student's role as a student should be prioritized along with their learning and skill development. In order to avoid potential conflicts of interest, the practicum educator cannot hold a position that works under the student's position within the organization. For instance, if the student is an Executive Director of the organization, a staff social worker within the organization cannot serve as the practicum educator.

The agency must be willing to allow the student/employee to attend classes and have an educationally focused practicum experience.

The agency must be willing to allow the practicum educator to attend practicum education training and seminars and to have sufficient time to provide a minimum of at least one hour/week of practicum supervision for the student. Supervision must focus on learning, skill development, and competency development. The agency must be able to provide a generalist practicum experience if the student/employee is applying for the first/foundation practicum. If the agency is providing a second/advanced year practicum, it is necessary to provide a practicum experience that allows the student to participate in advanced-level graduate social work activities.

The Employment-Based Application must be received by the deadline specified online. Once the application is returned to the practicum education Department, it will be reviewed, and a response will be given as soon as possible to indicate whether or not the practicum has been approved. A site visit may be required as part of the application review process prior to determining approval.

CAPSTONE PROJECT

For students counting any of their regular work duties as practicum, once practicum begins, students will be expected to create a learning contract that contains at least one project that spans two-semesters, that relates to the majority of the nine competencies, reflects attainment of social work values and ethics, and demonstrates substantial professional growth and development. Topic areas could include (for example) racial equity, anti-racism within social work practice, response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and/or trauma-informed practices within the agency. Examples include fully researching a topic, providing agency training on that topic, and then evaluating the training results.

At mid and final practicum, students will upload their project to their learning contract and write a reflection about the experience.

POLICY FOR EMPLOYMENT-BASED DISRUPTIONS

If a student's practicum is disrupted, i.e., the student is terminated, appropriate supervision is no longer possible, the student leaves the agency, the student would follow the same process as a practicum termination at a non-employment-based site. This process is outlined on page 36 of the practicum handbook.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In order for MSW students to receive high-quality education, the School, the practicum agency, the practicum educator, and the student each have responsibilities in this collaborative effort to prepare graduates for the social work profession.

The student

The responsibilities are:

- To arrange life and work schedule to include a practicum schedule that is consistent from week to week, and that meets the requirement for 15 hours of practicum education per week.
 - Full-time students – practicum hours will be during normal work hours

- Part-time students – practicum hours cannot be guaranteed for evening & weekend hours
- To access any electronic resources for the practicum course. (Currently, a Sonia account must be created in order to receive a grade for the practicum course.)
- To familiarize themselves with and abide by the policies and regulations of their practicum agency and those of the School of Social Work. This includes adhering to the policies and requirements outlined in this handbook, HIPAA requirements, Code of Ethics, and any other requirements specific to the practicum site.
- To follow UB School of Social Work processes for applying and interviewing for practicums. Students in the seated program should not solicit practicums by phone or in person.
- To not select practicums: a) where they have volunteered or been employed previously (IF you have previously worked or volunteered with the agency you must submit a request with the practicum office in order to proceed. A Petition form can be found in Sonia under forms); b) where they or an immediate family have received services in the past few years; or, c) where they have a personal or professional relationship with staff at this agency. Foundation students should alert the practicum office immediately if the practicum they have been assigned meets any of the above descriptions.
- To not transport agency clients
- To ensure that appearance and demeanor reflect a professional manner. Students should consult with the practicum educator regarding the agency dress code.
- To perform in a responsible, professional manner, maintaining commitments to the agency, the practicum educator, and the clients.
 - Agency computers should not be used for personal reasons.
 - Unless expecting an urgent message, personal cell phones should not be used during practicum time. If an urgent call is expected, authorization should be obtained from the practicum educator.
 - Personal cell phones should not be used to contact clients or to do agency business
 - Students should not be completing classroom work during practicum hours unless special authorization from the liaison and educator is obtained.
 - Students should arrive on time and stay for the full duration of their scheduled shift. A student's grade in practicum will be affected by tardiness or persistent absenteeism.
- Because social media lends itself to a number of possible ethical issues, students should consult with their practicum agency regarding related policies. Privacy, confidentiality, and the establishment of professional boundaries can be hindered when the necessary precautions to protect clients have not been taken. Students should be guided by the NASW Code of Ethics, Section 4.03, which states, "Social Workers should not permit their private conduct to interfere with their ability to fulfill their professional responsibilities."
- To take the initiative to seek advice and consultation from the agency practicum educator and/or faculty liaison.
- To discuss with the practicum educator and/or faculty liaison areas of concern or confusion about the practicum learning experience.
- Students should accept critical feedback and participate in problem-solving efforts and plans for corrective action.
- To take an active role in planning and implementing their learning experiences in the practicum, using the opportunities at the practicum site to integrate theory and practice, increasing their level of knowledge and self-awareness. To share course syllabi with the practicum educator.
- To develop a learning contract, jointly with the practicum educator, which identifies the activities and expectations to meet the competencies and outcomes identified by the School.
- To communicate educational needs and interests to the practicum educator and to notify the faculty liaison if they are not receiving educational experiences as outlined in the learning contract and/or an hour per week of supervision.
- To attend and be prepared for scheduled supervisory meetings with the practicum educator.
- To notify the practicum educator of any necessary absences from practicum as is expected in professional employment.
- To maintain a timesheet (on Sonia) that accurately documents attendance at practicum. To make up any missing practicum time to ensure that the required practicum education hours are met.
- To participate in any scheduled conferences with practicum educator and faculty liaison.

- To adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics in all practices in the role of intern.
- To participate in the evaluation process with the practicum educator by reviewing, signing, and following up on the delivery of the evaluation forms.
- To handle stress effectively by using appropriate self-care and developing supportive relationships with colleagues, peers, and others when stress impacts academic and professional performance.
- To seek and effectively use help for problems that interfere with academic and professional performance.

The faculty liaison

The responsibilities are:

- To meet with the practicum educator and the student in a three-way conference once each semester during the practicum. This may be in the form of a group meeting with the faculty liaison and all of their assigned students. Practicum educators may be invited to attend the group session to discuss practicum experiences. Videoconferencing and other communication tools can also be utilized.
- To be available as a consultant to the practicum educator and student throughout the practicum.
- To review the practicum education learning contract developed between the student and practicum educator, adding input as needed.
- To assist the practicum educator and student in integrating class and practicum experiences.
- To review the *practicum Learning Contract and Evaluation Form* completed by the practicum educator.
- To assign students' grades based on feedback and recommendations from the practicum educator.
- To assess the quality of the practicum instruction and opportunities provided to students and make recommendations to the Director of practicum education based on this assessment.

The practicum educator

The responsibilities are:

- To participate in an orientation session provided by the School (required for all new practicum educators).
- To provide the student with an orientation to the agency, including information on safety protocol, HIPAA requirements, or other regulations specific to the practicum site.
- To provide a suitable workspace.
- To coordinate the involvement of other agency staff with the student's learning experience.
- To develop, with the student, a learning contract which reflects the learning opportunities and activities to meet the competencies and expected outcomes identified by the school.
- To provide a minimum of one hour per week of supervision in order to provide feedback, education, and role modeling. Supervision periods may be divided into two sessions. This time should be safeguarded so as not to allow interruptions.
- To review the course syllabi provided by the student in order to assist in the integration of practicum and academic experiences.
- To identify assignments to help the foundation year student learn a broad range of social work interventions and/or Advanced Year students to experience activities related to their area of study.
- To provide ongoing evaluation of the student throughout the practicum and to provide feedback on progress toward meeting their identified objectives.
- To notify the faculty liaison of any problems or questions as soon as they become evident.
- To complete and submit, by the designated time, a written mid-practicum and final evaluation of the student's progress.
- To ensure that the student completes the minimum required hours for the practicum.
- To participate in three-way conferences with the student and faculty liaison during the practicum.
- To abide by the NASW Code of Ethics.

SELECTION, MONITORING & EVALUATION OF PRACTICUM EDUCATORS & AGENCIES

Criteria for the selection of practicum educators:

- A Master's Degree in social work (Must meet the licensing requirements of the state in which they practice and provide supervision within the appropriate scope of practice)
- Willingness to meet the stated practicum educator Responsibilities
- To be free of any professional sanctions by NASW
- Two years of post-graduate experience. The practicum Director may make exceptions to this criterion where the proposed educator is familiar with the School's curriculum or has prior experience in practicum education.

Agencies are selected as practicum sites and monitored according to the following guidelines:

Criteria for Selection of Agencies:

- The ethics and values of social work should be demonstrated through the policies, program design, and delivery of services of the agency.
- The agency must be willing to support an educational focus for students, providing social work experiences that will meet the learning objectives identified by the School.
- The agency contact person is expected to complete the *Agency/Organization Data Form* to provide a written description of the agency, including types of student assignments available.
- The agency must provide adequate space for the student.
- The agency will provide professionals qualified to provide practicum instruction.
- The agency will support practicum education staff time availability to provide a minimum of one hour per week of supervision, to attend practicum educator orientations, training, and faculty liaison conferences.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

- The quality of the learning experience.
- The quality of the communication between the agency and the school.
- Program or personnel changes that would affect student learning.
- School of Social Work curriculum changes that would affect student learning.
- Practicum educator attendance at practicum education training sessions/workshops.

Monitoring the quality of practicum education is an ongoing process that is accomplished via personal and telephone contact between the practicum education Department faculty and staff, faculty liaison, and the practicum educator. Students provide feedback to the Practicum Education Department through the *Student Evaluation of Practicum Experience Survey* completed at the end of their practicum experience. Faculty liaisons identify any concerns and what support was provided to address these concerns. Additional meetings may be scheduled between the agency and the Practicum Education Department staff to address areas of concern and to evaluate the appropriateness of an agency to continue as a practicum site.

SUPPORT FOR PRACTICUM EDUCATORS

UB School of Social Work requires all new practicum educators to participate in an orientation/training session. Offered in the fall and sometimes in spring, these orientation sessions provide information about the School's philosophy, curriculum, and issues related to practicum education. Instruction is provided on the use of the practicum education learning contract and the student evaluation. Practicum educator training sessions and workshops may also be provided throughout the academic year. Practicum educators receive ongoing support, as needed, from the faculty liaison.

To enhance the practicum educator experience, practicum educators are eligible to receive tuition waivers for graduate-level courses. At the end of each academic year, a reception is held for practicum educators, providing

an opportunity for ongoing interaction between the School's faculty and practicum educators. The *Outstanding Achievement in Practicum Education Award* is presented at this event.

TASK SUPERVISION & ALTERNATE MODELS OF PRACTICUM EDUCATION

Although most agencies assign MSW employees to work one-on-one with interns, there are a variety of alternative models of practicum education. Experienced MSW practicum educators may coordinate internships (and meet with students at least one hour a week) while agency supervisors without an MSW can provide daily **task supervision**. Group supervision is another alternative.

Task Supervision: While the practicum educator has the primary responsibility for students' learning in the practicum, a Task Supervisor may be designated by the practicum educator or agency to assume specific responsibilities for a student's learning.

The Task Supervisor does not replace the practicum educator and must work in collaboration with the practicum educator to ensure that the student's learning goals are being met and that regular feedback is provided.

The Task Supervisor

The responsibilities are:

- To attend an orientation session provided by the School (strongly encouraged for all new task supervisors).
- To provide input into the student learning contract, in addition to the input of the practicum educator.
- To provide input to the mid-semester and final evaluation of the student in collaboration with the primary practicum educator and the student.
- To provide primary, direct supervision of the students' daily activities.
- To assign cases and projects congruent with students' educational goals.
- To orient students to the agency and their assignments.
- To give on-the-spot positive and constructive feedback to students regarding their performance.
- To focus on the student's skill development.
- To consult with the MSW practicum educator regarding the students' skill areas that need extra attention.
- To be familiar with practicum education Policies and Procedures.
- To meet with the practicum educator and the student at least twice each month to address progress being made.
- To meet with the practicum educator and the faculty liaison at least once each semester of the student's internship, to address progress being made.
- To notify practicum educators and faculty liaisons when problems arise.

Qualifications:

While a Master's Degree in Social Work is not required for task supervisors, the task supervisor must work in a related discipline and have an understanding of the social work perspective. The task supervisor typically has expertise in an area that expands a student's learning opportunities.

PRACTICUM EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD

Community practicum education Advisory Board

A practicum education Advisory Board is composed of a group of practicum educators, agency liaisons, faculty, and students. Members are representative of practicum agencies/organizations that work with students at the foundation level, as well as from each of the School's various Advanced Year areas.

The purpose of the advisory board is fourfold:

1. to provide an opportunity and mechanism for the school and community to have ongoing conversations,
2. to enhance the collaboration between the school and the community in educating students for their future in social work,
3. to ensure that the school of social work is remaining abreast of the ongoing changes that occur in the local community services organizations and to share changes within the school of social work in order to gain feedback, and
4. to strengthen the School's efforts in continuing to develop quality practicums for our students.

Student Participation in Practicum Education Advisory Board

Student members are recruited to participate in and provide key input into practicum program planning.

ORIENTATION TO PRACTICUM SETTINGS

The initial days of the practicum experience can set the tone for the many weeks to come. Both students and practicum educators come into the practicum with high anxiety and expectations. Adjusting to new roles and settings can be overwhelming, exciting, and exhausting. An **Orientation Checklist** (*Appendix C*) is provided to offer a guideline for planning the activities for the initial period of practicum. A well-thought-out orientation can allay anxiety and allow students to have the necessary information to help them engage more effectively with agency staff and clients. It is important at this beginning stage for the student and practicum educator to get to know each other and begin to build a working relationship. It should be a time to encourage questions, comments, and reactions about roles and expectations. It is during this initial time that students will be gaining input from practicum educators and task supervisors (as relevant) about activities available that will go into developing a learning contract.

SAFETY ISSUES IN PRACTICUMS

The School expects that the practicum educator and/or task supervisors will inform the student of policies and protocol regarding safety related to the agency's practice. At the beginning of the practicum, students should be made aware of practices that maximize personal safety in the office, on home visits, and in the community.

In order to maximize safety and reduce the risks involved in practicum work, students are expected to read and adhere to both the Personal Safety and Risk Management Strategies identified in *Appendix E* of this handbook and any safety policies and protocols at the practicum agency. Students should initiate a discussion with their practicum educator about any safety concerns at the practicum site, and feel free to contact the practicum education staff with any questions.

In the event of a student feeling physically or emotionally unsafe, including being injured, harassed, or threatened, the agency and/or the Director of Practicum Education & Student Services should contact the Director of Practicum Education & Student Services immediately to ensure that the appropriate steps are taken to follow up on the incident.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS CODE OF ETHICS

The School expects that all students and practicum educators will abide by the NASW Code of Ethics. A copy of the Code of Ethics can be obtained through the National Association of Social Workers (Telephone: 800-638-8799 or [website](#)).

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The University is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and stalking. If you have experienced gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), UB has resources to help. This includes academic accommodations, health and counseling services, housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and assistance with reporting the incident to police or other UB officials if you so choose.

Please be aware that UB employees may be required reporters. This means that if you tell UB personnel about a situation, they may have to report the information to the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Although the situation may need to be reported, you will still have options about how the situation will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Please know that if you do not wish to have UB proceed with an investigation, your request will be honored unless UB's failure to act does not adequately mitigate the risk of harm to you or other members of the University community. You also have the option of speaking with trained counselors who can maintain complete confidentiality.

You may call UB's Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at (716) 645-2266 for more information, and you have the option of calling that office anonymously if you would prefer not to disclose your identity.

MEDICAL POLICY

University Policy:

Every student in a clinical assignment must have a medical statement regarding immunizations. This is on file in the University Health Services.

OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard with respect to Hepatitis B vaccine:

Many health care organizations require students practicing in their agencies to receive the Hepatitis B vaccination or sign a declination statement as a condition of practicing in the facility. The Hepatitis B vaccine is a safe and effective method of preventing Hepatitis B infection.

Hospital Settings – Additional Requirements

Students doing their practicum in a hospital setting may have additional health/medical requirements, including.

- Proof of Hepatitis B vaccination
- Proof of Td (Tetanus-diphtheria) booster within ten years
- Proof of PPD (Mantoux) skin test for tuberculosis performed within one year, and a chest x-ray if positive
- Proof of immunity against measles (Rubella) and German measles
- COVID-19 vaccination
- Physician's statement that the student is free from any health impairment that may pose a risk of illness or injury to health center patients or interfere with the performance of his/her assigned duties.

INSURANCE COVERAGE

UB School of Social Work students who are involved in non-employment based practicums are covered for general liability under an insurance policy carried by the State University of New York. The practicum agency is listed as an additional insured. A certificate of insurance will be forwarded to practicum agencies upon request.

If desired, students are able to purchase student (malpractice) liability insurance through NASW. Information and application can be obtained at the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) website: www.naswdc.org.

Please be advised that although the University provides general liability coverage while a student is in practicum, the policy does not include health insurance or automobile coverage related to practicum activities; **students should not transport clients.**

CSWE CURRICULUM POLICY STATEMENT

The Curriculum Policy Statement for Master's Degree Programs in Social Work provided by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) can be found at www.cswe.org or can be requested from the Practicum Education Department. The CSWE is the body responsible for accrediting Schools of Social Work.

USE OF THIS HANDBOOK IN CONJUNCTION WITH STUDENT HANDBOOK

Students should use this practicum education Handbook in conjunction with the *Student Handbook*. The *Student Handbook* provides additional policy information related to the MSW program. The [Student Handbook may be accessed on the School of Social Work website](#).

APPENDIX SECTION

- A MSW Program Curriculum Overview
- B Additional Practicum Experience
- C Orientation Checklist for MSW Interns
- D Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- E Basic Principles of Personal Safety/Risk Management Strategies for Social Work Interns
- F Understanding Professional Ethical Conduct in Social Work Practice
- G Policy: Practicum Status Review Process
- H Policy: Review of Students Who Experience Two Unsuccessful Practicum Interviews
- I practicum education Log / Journal Assignments (Sample Page of Journaling)
- J Technical Standards

A. MSW PROGRAM CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Please refer to our [Curriculum Overview Website](#)

B. ADDITIONAL PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE

Additional Practicum Experience (SW719) Elective Practicum Credit

Students interested in an extra practicum experience can register for this optional two-credit course. It is designed to enable students to gain additional advanced social work practice experience in the advanced year. Students complete an additional 120 hours in a given semester. In order to be enrolled, they must also be registered for SW 552 or SW 553.

Additional Practicum Experience Criteria:

1. Students must not be under a process of review; must be in good standing
2. A student cannot get additional credit simply by being at the practicum for additional hours; prior approval is required
3. Approval is required at the start of the semester. A student or educator might propose elective credit at the time of the practicum interview.
4. Students who choose to gain elective credits connected to their practicum should discuss this option with their advisor.
5. Practicum educator approval is required.
6. Once practicum educator approval is acquired, the student should discuss the option with their faculty liaison. The faculty liaison monitors the quality of learning via learning contract activities
7. Next, an Elective Credit form should be submitted to the Director of practicum education. Students should indicate how the additional hours will be scheduled.
8. The form is signed by the Director of practicum education. A final signed copy is placed in the student's file.
9. The student then registers under the practicum Director for the one-credit elective.

Independent Study Connected to Additional Time in Practicum

Students in their Advanced Year practicum occasionally elect to do a third day in practicum in the second semester. Students may elect to do this for an enhanced learning experience without requesting additional credit for this time. If, however, a student wishes to gain extra credit for additional time and specific project work in practicum, they must register for an *Independent Study* and follow the criteria listed below.

Independent Study Criteria:

1. A student cannot get additional credit simply by being at the practicum for a 3rd day doing the same activities.
2. The *Independent Study* must produce a "product" that can be graded. This will be a totally separate grade from the practicum. An *Independent Study* requires a letter grade (A, B, C) as opposed to an "S" (satisfactory) or "U" (unsatisfactory) grade earned for practicum.

3. Students may choose to do a variety of activities related to the additional practicum day. Examples of such activities may include: developing and implementing a psycho educational group for clients at the agency; developing a resource directory for the agency, or doing a literature review or research paper on a particular intervention to be used with consumers at the agency.
4. Students who choose to gain Independent Study credit connected to their practicum should first discuss this option with their agency practicum educator for approval. Once approved by the practicum educator, the student should discuss the option with their faculty liaison.
5. Next, an Independent Study Contract form, which can be found in the School's Student Handbook, should be submitted to the Director of practicum education. Students should indicate how many credits they are registering for (from 1 to 3 credits, depending on the amount of work involved in the project).
6. The form is signed by the Director of practicum education and the MSW Program Director. A final, signed copy of the Independent Study Contract form will be placed in the student's file.
7. The student then registers under the practicum Director for the appropriate number of Independent Study credit hours.

The practicum Director, in consultation with the faculty liaison, will be responsible for overseeing the *Independent Study* and for providing a grade.

C. ORIENTATION CHECKLIST FOR MSW INTERNS

University at Buffalo – School of Social Work

(SAMPLE – MODEL)

Please date each item as it is reviewed/completed.

___ Organizational Chart of Agency

___ Mission Statement

___ Overview of agency treatment/service components, brochures

___ Other agency sites: arrange visits

___ List of staff/credentials/titles/phone extensions

___ Scheduling interviews with agency staff, directors of agency programs

___ Description & schedule of groups offered at the agency

___ Meetings: purpose, format, location & time (i.e. Staff meetings, Case Conference)

___ Policies & Procedures: Include specifics (i.e. procedures for the implementation of HIPAA regulations) and/or reference where to locate Policies and Procedures Handbook.

___ Safety Protocols (in office, home visits, dealing with potentially volatile clients, etc.)

___ Lethality assessments/ Duty to warn

___ Child abuse reporting procedure

___ How to make a referral: within agency, outside agency, specific agencies

___ Confidentiality regulations, use of appropriate consent for information release forms including those to meet HIPAA regulations.

___ NASW Code of Ethics available at www.naswdc.org

___ Forms used by the agency: Assessment forms, progress notes, Release of Information forms, Insurance & Billing forms, etc., and where to locate them.

___ Documentation: chart order, progress notes, treatment plans, writing letters

___ List of Community resources/Referral sources

___ Dress code

___ Sign in Sheet

ORIENTATION CHECKLIST FOR MSW INTERNS *(Continued)*

- ___ Use of phones, fax machine, copy machine, computers, shredder
- ___ Physical space: office, restrooms, mailbox, phone messages, lunchroom, parking
- ___ Security/locking up
- ___ Supplies: Where to find
- ___ Coffee Fund
- ___ Plan for weekly supervision
- ___ Educational assessment/tools (experience, learning style, etc.)
- ___ Educational learning tools (journaling, process recording)
- ___ Learning contract
- ___ Articles: Provide a bibliography & where to locate or a copy of the actual article.
Include articles specific to the population served, agency principles, and cultural competence, interventions, etc.

Suggestions to Practicum Educators for Developing an Orientation Handbook for Interns

1. Developing an orientation handbook is an excellent way to tune into what information the student needs. It provides organization and a reference handbook. Practicum educators can refer students to read the handbook ahead of time for nuts & bolts information, then review information in supervision for questions. This will save time and provide clarity for present and future students.
2. The above checklist provides suggested items that can be placed in an orientation handbook for student reference. Think of the essentials for your setting.
3. A 3-ring binder with dividers provides an excellent format. Tabs can be made for sections (i.e., Organizational Structure, Services, Policies, Procedures, Forms, and Articles).
4. If you do not already have a handbook, your student can help you to develop one. As you go over material, forms, resource list, etc., you and the student can put a copy of the material into the binder. Have students take notes on protocols or procedures not already documented and write them up for inclusion in the handbook. Reviewing what they put together will help you check out their communication, organizational, and writing skills.
5. Once a handbook is developed, it can be easily updated as agency forms change or new policies need to be added for use with future interns.

D. HEALTH INSURANCE PORTABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (HIPAA)

Note that students should use agency-supported technology to deliver service, and not their personal email or software accounts.

Information on Client Confidentiality

HIPAA is a piece of legislation that endeavors to ensure a necessary flow of information for health insurance purposes, while increasing protection of consumers' health information privacy. While you will receive a good deal of ethical and practice information about confidentiality as your education in the School of Social Work progresses, it is a requirement of the HIPAA legislation that you be informed of basic privacy practices prior to entering your internship site. The following information will acquaint you with confidentiality practices and is also specific to the HIPAA legislation.

Clients must consent to the use or disclosure of their protected health information by healthcare providers, for the purpose of diagnosing or providing treatment and obtaining payment for health care services performed. They must be informed that for diagnosis or treatment by you, they must sign a form provided by your practicum agency.

The client has the right to revoke their consent, in writing, at any time, except to the extent that the agency has taken action in reliance on their consent. (i.e., released information to others before the client revoked)

The client must be informed that they have the right to review the agency or institution's *Notice of Privacy Practices Handout* prior to signing a document provided to them by the agency. The *Notice of Privacy Practices Handout* describes the types of uses and disclosures of their protected health information that may occur in treatment and payment of bills or in the performance of health care operations. The *Notice of Privacy Practices* also describes the client's rights and the agency's or institution's duties with respect to their protected health information.

The agency reserves the right to change the privacy practices that are described in the *Notice of Privacy Practices Handout*. The client must be informed that they may obtain a revised notice of privacy practices and how this document can be obtained. The client must also sign a form provided by the agency or institution stating they have received the HIPAA privacy information document.

HIPAA Privacy Rule Compliance: State Law Preemption

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)-Privacy Rule contains a variety of complex requirements and new terminology that all practitioners must learn and understand. One of the challenging areas specifically related to behavioral health practitioners involves State Law Preemption. This means that Federal law (i.e., the Privacy Rule) takes precedence over State confidentiality laws unless the State law is more stringent. **Students should receive this information at their respective practicum agencies.**

The student is responsible for discussing with his/her practicum educator at the practicum agency any Protected Health Information (PHI) being brought to classroom presentations and assignments.

The client's PHI means health information, including demographic information, collected from them and created or received by their physician, another health care provider, a health plan, their employer, or a health care clearinghouse. This protected health information relates to their past, present or future physical or mental health where there is a reasonable basis to believe the information may identify them. **(See next page for *HIPAA Identifiers That Must Be Removed*.)**

HIPAA IDENTIFIERS THAT MUST BE REMOVED

All of the following are considered identifiers of the individual or of relatives, employers, or household members of the individual:

1. Names
2. All geographic subdivisions smaller than a State, including street address, city, county, precinct, zip code, and their equivalent geocodes, except for the initial three digits of a zip code if, according to the current publicly available data from the Bureau of the Census;
3. All elements of dates (except year) for dates directly related to an individual, including birth date, admission date, discharge date, date of death; and all ages over 89 and all elements of dates (including year) indicative of such age, except that such ages and elements may be aggregated into a single category of age 90 or older;
4. Telephone Numbers;
5. Fax Numbers;
6. Electronic Mail Addresses;
7. Social Security Numbers;
8. Medical Record Numbers;
9. Health Plan Beneficiary Numbers;
10. Account Numbers;
11. Certificate/License Numbers;
12. Vehicle Identifiers and Serial Nos., incl. License Plate Nos.;
13. Device Identifiers and Serial Numbers;
14. Web Universal Resource Locators (URLs);
15. Internet Protocol (IP) Address Numbers;
16. Biometric Identifiers, including Finger and Voice Prints
17. Full Face Photographic Images and any Comparable Images; and
18. Any other unique identifying number, characteristic, or code.

The information provided here is available to the public and should not be construed as legal advice. It will be essential that interns also ask for and receive HIPAA training that is specific to their respective practicum agency.

E. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PERSONAL SAFETY/RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL WORK INTERNS

1. Assessing and managing personal safety risk are essential social work skills (essential life skills). These include becoming aware of the indicators of risk and developing a purposeful and thoughtful strategy to reduce or avoid the risk.
2. It is not possible to eliminate risk, but there are specific strategies one can utilize to reduce threats to personal safety.
3. Remember you are ultimately responsible for your own personal safety. Pay attention to your instincts. They can be an important guide to danger.
4. Practicum educators should provide an orientation for interns to personal safety procedures in their practicum agencies. If students have not received this information, they should request it. Policies and procedures will vary in different agency settings. Policies may include requiring home visits to be done in pairs, requiring interview rooms to remain open during sessions, or a specific set of procedures which should be followed if a staff member finds themselves in a potentially dangerous situation.
5. Interns should always inform their practicum educator and faculty liaison of incidents where they feel their personal safety is threatened.
6. Social workers frequently work with clients who have histories of violence, aggression, mental illness, and substance abuse.
7. Be alert to all parties in your immediate environment.
8. Carry yourself in a confident manner. Be purposeful in your actions.
9. Be friendly; however, do not disclose a great deal of information about yourself or your family.
10. At all times consider safety. Use your observational skills to practice safely.
11. Your supervisor or someone in the agency should know where you are. Before going on home visits, give specific information about your destination and approximate time of arrival and departure. If you are concerned about seeing a particular client, ask for assistance or take another worker with you.

Risk Management Strategies in preparing for Agency Visits for Social Work Interns:

1. Be aware of the physical setting where you will be seeing clients. Where is the desk located? Always have a pathway to the door. Do not seat your client between you and the door.
2. Don't place excessive items on your desk. Paperweights, staplers, and scissors can all become weapons.
3. If appropriate, leave the door open when meeting with clients.
4. Find out if the agency has a buzzer system or other methods to communicate with staff when an individual worker is having problems.
5. Keep your supervisor/other staff informed when and where you will be seeing clients. Never remain alone in a building when seeing clients.
6. Never work in the building alone. Your practicum educator or other staff should be on site and available to you when you are engaged in practicum activities.

7. Be aware of the environment when entering and leaving the agency. If you observe suspicious circumstances, notify your supervisor, or wait for others to leave the building so you can walk with them.

Risk Management Strategies for Home Visits & Work in the Community for Social Work Interns:

1. Home visits are a frequent part of social work services. It is not necessary to be afraid, just to be observant and use good judgment.
2. Notify your practicum supervisor that you will be making a home visit. Give specific information about your destination and approximate arrival/departure times. If you are concerned about seeing a particular client, ask for assistance or take another worker with you.
3. When visiting a community/making home visits, do not wear expensive jewelry or do things that will make you stand out. Dress in a manner conducive to your practicum activities. Wear clothes that will allow you to run if necessary.
4. When you are in the local neighborhood, be sure to scan the environment and be aware of what is happening around you.
5. A cellular phone is very useful. If you do not have a phone, pay attention to where the nearest phone is located.
6. Carry yourself in a confident, professional manner. Send a message that you are here for a purpose. Be respectful of those in the community.
7. If you are in an unfamiliar building and are using the elevator, try to get on an unoccupied elevator. If the door opens and people who make you feel uncomfortable are on the elevator, simply state that you are going in the other direction.
8. When you knock on the door of a dwelling, pay attention to the sounds you hear from inside. If a heated argument is going on, you may want to wait or go to a pay phone to verify if this is a good time for a visit.
9. Always identify yourself, and do not enter the dwelling until you are invited in. Once inside, don't sit down until you are invited. Choose a seat close to the door and ask if you may sit there.
10. Remember, you are on the client's territory. Home visits are not inherently dangerous; however, people may react differently when they are on their territory.
11. If there are animals in the home, do not assume they will not harm you. Ask the client to please restrain the animal or put them in another room.
12. Do not turn your back on an irate client. Keep them in your vision at all times!
13. When you are in a client's home, be aware of the other people who are also there. Their behaviors such as drug taking, violence, and extreme anger should also be considered when assessing risk.
14. If you observe drugs or weapons, you should reschedule the visit and leave as soon as possible.
15. Find out about the communities where you will be working. Discuss with other workers at the agency. If working in a high crime area, discuss specifically what the safety guidelines are with your practicum educator. Do not go into high-crime areas at night.
16. When making home visits, ask the client about any safety concerns in his or her neighborhood and recommended safety strategies.

17. Make sure that you have your car keys in your hand. Always lock your car once you are in the car and after you get out.
18. If you will be placing your purse in the car trunk, do it before you leave the office to avoid calling attention to the act, or leave it in the office.
19. Check your car for sufficient gas before you leave the office. Think what you would do if you had car trouble or a flat tire. Do you have an auto club? Do you know how to fix a flat? Make sure you have emergency equipment in your car, such as a flashlight, jumper cables, and an emergency road kit.
20. When parking your car, choose a spot that is close to a light. Park as close to where you are going as possible. Make sure your car is pointed in the direction to leave.
21. Do not transport clients in any vehicle. Discuss this with your practicum supervisor at the pre-practicum interview, so there are no unexpected requests from the agency to do so.
22. Before you leave the office, make sure you have the correct directions and phone numbers. Get a map and plan your trip. If you get lost, go to a gas station or convenience store to ask directions.

Guidelines for Dealing with Agitated Clients:

If a client becomes agitated or confrontational:

1. Maintain an appropriate distance. Sometimes, we tend to move closer to an individual, and this can escalate a situation or put you in danger of being assaulted. You may need to give them space to walk out of the area or to remove yourself from the area. If needed, ask a supervisor or another staff in authority to assist you. (Allowing you to disengage with the person, get out of danger, and make someone aware of the volatile situation.)
2. Encourage the person to have a seat if they are standing. Pacing can increase the agitation. You may wish to stand until assistance arrives, or you may choose to sit after the client sits.
3. Do not touch the person, even if attempting to simply pat them on the shoulder to reassure them.
4. Watch carefully and remain alert. Clenched fists, hands that are opening and closing in a frenzied manner, darting eyes or a wide-eyed, panic-stricken look, and tensed jaw muscles can provide indicators that the person is very agitated. If aggressive behaviors continue to escalate despite your efforts to assist the client in calming down, identify an opportunity to leave this volatile situation to get help.
5. When faced with verbal confrontation, keep your voice calm. Do not engage in an argument. Speaking softly will sometimes allow the person to lower their tone in order to hear what you are saying.
6. Provide an honorable avenue of escape. Know when to terminate a session. Do not become so focused on the task that you ignore warning signs of a potentially dangerous situation. Offer to reschedule the appointment. You may ask the client to wait in the waiting room while you contact your supervisor for direction as to how to proceed in assisting them.
7. Realize that an individual who is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs has an increased risk of unstable or volatile behavior and impaired judgment. Learn to identify signs of being under the influence: glassy eyes, dilated pupils, staggering, odor of alcohol or marijuana, irrational or illogical behavior, acting uncharacteristically different, extremely depressed, or elevated mood. It is not useful to attempt to resolve issues with a client in this condition. It is recommended that you terminate the session and reschedule.
8. If you are threatened with violence, disengage immediately until you can get assistance from your supervisor or local police if necessary.

F. UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL ETHICAL CONDUCT IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Social work students are expected to adhere to the standards and ethics of the profession as articulated in the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) *Code of Ethics* and the Standards of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Prior to signing this agreement, you are asked to read the entire NASW *Code of Ethics*. This document may be found in your student handbook or on the [NASW website](#).. The following areas of the NASW *Code of Ethics* are of particular relevance for your practicum experiences:

Commitment to Clients (1.01)

Social workers' primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients.

Cultural Competence and Social Diversity (1.05)

Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.

Self-Determination (1.06)

Social workers respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination and assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals.

Conflicts of Interest (1.06)

- a) Social workers should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment.
- b) Social workers should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship.
- c) Social workers should not engage in dual or multiple relationships with clients or former clients, in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client.

Privacy and Confidentiality (1.07)

Social workers should protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of professional services, except for compelling professional reasons.

Sexual Relationships (1.09 a and c)

Social workers under no circumstances engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with current clients, whether such contact is consensual or forced. Additionally, social workers should not engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with former clients because of the potential for harm to the client.

Physical Contact (1.10)

Social workers should not engage in physical contact with clients when there is a possibility of psychological harm to the client as a result of the contact (such as cradling or caressing clients).

Derogatory Language (1.12)

Social workers should not use derogatory language in their written or verbal communications to or about clients. Social workers should use accurate and respectful language in all communications to and about the clients.

Payment for Services (1.13b)

Social workers should avoid accepting goods or services from clients as payment for professional services.

Dishonesty, Fraud and Deception (4.04)

Social workers should not participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or deception.

The NASW in 2018 added the following language regarding technology and social work practice:

With growth in the use of communication technology in various aspects of social work practice, social workers need to be aware of the unique challenges that may arise in relation to the maintenance of confidentiality, informed consent, professional boundaries, professional competence, record keeping, and other ethical

considerations. In general, all ethical standards in this *Code of Ethics* are applicable to interactions, relationships, or communications, whether they occur in person or with the use of technology. For the purposes of this *Code*, “technology-assisted social work services” include any social work services that involve the use of computers, mobile or landline telephones, tablets, video technology, or other electronic or digital technologies; this includes the use of various electronic or digital platforms, such as the Internet, online social media, chat rooms, text messaging, e-mail, and emerging digital applications. Technology-assisted social work services encompass all aspects of social work practice, including psychotherapy; individual, family, or group counseling; community organization; administration; advocacy; mediation; education; supervision; research; evaluation; and other social work services. Social workers should keep apprised of emerging technological developments that may be used in social work practice and how various ethical standards apply to them.

NOTE: If at any time during your practicum, you find yourself in a situation in which you have questions or concerns about a potential ethical issue or dilemma, contact your practicum instructor or faculty liaison immediately.

G. POLICY: PRACTICUM STATUS REVIEW PROCESS

University at Buffalo – School of Social Work

Topic: Practicum Status Review Process

Section: Practicum Education

Original Date: 06/13/2006

Date Revised: 08/7/24

Updated By: K. McClain-Meeder; K. Stalker

POLICY: A student's practicum status may be reviewed when a practicum is terminated and a student is in jeopardy of failing, or has failed SW550, 551, 552, or 553 (practicum education courses).

If termination occurred and practicum failure is *not* being considered, the student will meet with practicum faculty and staff and will be given an option to repeat practicum.

If practicum failure has occurred or is being considered, a formal practicum status review meeting will be held with practicum education, student services, and the MSW Program Director. The practicum status committee will determine whether the student will be permitted to repeat the practicum in another practicum site. If the student will not be permitted to repeat the practicum, the student will be dismissed from the program. The student has the option of voluntarily withdrawing from the program or appealing the dismissal prior to the dismissal deadline.

ORIGIN OF POLICY: Academic Affairs

QUESTIONS REGARDING POLICY TO: MSW Program Director

RESPONSIBILITY	PROCEDURE
faculty liaison	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Notifies the Director of practicum education (DPE) as soon as it is determined that the student will fail or is at risk of receiving a failing grade for the practicum course.2. Provides DPE with a copy of the practicum Performance Evaluation of whether available and the practicum Liaison Summary Report documenting the reasons for potential failure and the efforts taken during the semester to support the student in an attempt to prevent failure.
practicum education Representative	<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Contacts all parties (practicum education and student services representative(s), faculty liaison, MSW Director, Advisor, and the student) to schedule a mutually agreed-upon time for the review meeting.4. The student is informed that they can bring one support person (i.e., fellow student or someone from outside of school) to the meeting. The student must indicate their intention to bring a support person in advance of the review meeting. They will then be asked to sign a FERPA waiver for the support person, as the student's confidential academic information will be discussed in the meeting. The support person is not an active participant in the meeting. Students may not bring an attorney to represent them, and if they do so, the meeting will be cancelled and the student and attorney will be referred to the SUNY Office of General Counsel.5. Shares a copy of the practicum Performance Evaluation, if available, and the practicum Liaison Summary Report with all identified parties at least five academic days prior to the meeting.

RESPONSIBILITY	PROCEDURE
Student Services Representative	6. Once the review meeting is scheduled, a hold is placed on the student's account to prevent resignation from the practicum course.
Representative(s) from practicum Education, Student Services, MSW Director, Faculty Liaison and Student (Advisor may attend at their discretion.)	7. Meet to discuss the circumstances of the failure or potential failure, and to obtain student feedback. The student is given an opportunity to address each of the issues identified. Once the discussion is completed, the student will be excused from the room.
Representative(s) from practicum Education, Student Services, MSW Director, Faculty Liaison	<p>8. Based on the circumstances and information presented, those present at the review meeting deliberate and determine whether the student will have the option to repeat the practicum course, and if so, whether hours can carry forward. A determination is made about the grade. The DFE is responsible for assigning the grade in the Hub.</p> <p>The group will consider the student's progress in attainment of the necessary competencies in their practicum setting and will consider the Code of Ethics and CSWE competencies.</p> <p>A second failure of a practicum course will automatically result in dismissal from the program.</p>
Practicum Education Director or Assistant Director for practicum Education	<p>9. If a determination is made to allow the student to repeat a practicum, the FED or Assistant Director of practicum education sends a letter within 10 academic days informing the student of the decision, along with any recommendations.</p> <p>10. Members of the practicum Team will make the decision about practicum location based on their assessment of the student's professional development needs. While practicum personnel will attempt to replace a student right away, due to agency availability, it may not be possible to restart practicum until the following semester.</p>

RESPONSIBILITY	PROCEDURE
practicum education Director or Assistant Director for practicum education; MSW Director	<p>11. If student impairment is identified as a concern, practicum personnel will talk to the student about the impairment policy option. If the student states that they are willing to engage in the impairment process, the practicum personnel submit a written request for review to the SSW Impairment Committee.</p> <p>The student has the right to refuse the impairment process, voluntarily withdraw from the program, or opt for dismissal. The student notifies the MSW Director within 14 academic days from the date of email notification of their decision to participate in the impairment process. If the student does not contact the MSW Director with a decision after 14 days and has not voluntarily withdrawn from the program, the MSW Director will dismiss the student from the program, notifying the student via email.</p>
MSW Program Director	<p>12. If the student will not be given an opportunity to repeat practicum in an alternate setting, which then automatically results in dismissal, the MSW Director sends written notification of this determination to the student via email within 10 academic days.</p> <p>The student can appeal their dismissal from the School of Social Work to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. The process for requesting reinstatement, as outlined in the Student Handbook, is followed.</p> <p>Information about reinstatement can be found in the <u>MSW Student Handbook</u>.</p>
Student	<p>13. If not dismissed, can file a grievance with the SSW Committee on Students (if criteria outlined in the Student Handbook are met).</p> <p>14. The student can voluntarily withdraw from the program at any time.</p>

H. POLICY: REVIEW OF STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE TWO UNSUCCESSFUL PRACTICUM INTERVIEWS

Topic: Review of Students Who Experience Two Unsuccessful Practicum Interviews

Section: Practicum Education Revised: 07/24/2023

Date: August 6, 2019

By: K Stalker; K McClain-Meeder

POLICY: Students who experience two unsuccessful practicum interviews will participate in a review meeting. A review meeting will be scheduled to determine whether the student will be allowed to continue in the practicum course. If not allowed to continue, and the student is registered for the practicum course, a determination is made about the grade.

ORIGIN OF POLICY: Academic Affairs

QUESTIONS REGARDING POLICY TO: Director of practicum education

RESPONSIBILITY	PROCEDURE
Practicum Education Representative	1. Notifies student advisor and MSW Director, providing a summary report of unsuccessful interviews and actions taken.
Practicum Education Representative	2. Contacts all parties (student, practicum education, and student services representative(s), advisor, MSW Director) to schedule a mutually agreed-upon time for the review meeting. 3. The student is informed that they can bring one support person (i.e., fellow student or outside of school person) to the meeting. The student must indicate their intention to bring a support person in advance of the review meeting. They will then be asked to sign a FERPA waiver for the support person, as the student's confidential academic information will be discussed in the meeting. The support person is not an active participant in the meeting. Students may not bring an attorney to represent them, and if they do so, the meeting will be cancelled and the student and attorney will be referred to the SUNY Office of General Counsel.
Representative(s) from practicum education, Student Services, MSW Director (Advisor may attend at their discretion.)	4. Meet to discuss the circumstances of the unsuccessful interviews and to obtain student feedback. Once the review meeting is complete, the student will be excused from the room. 5. Make a determination, based on the information gathered, whether the student will or will not have the option to be sent on another practicum interview, and what grade will be assigned if the student is registered in the practicum course. The DFE is responsible for assigning the grade in the Hub. A second failure of the practicum course automatically results in dismissal from the program. 6. If it is determined that the student will be allowed to interview, a plan of action, including recommendations and steps that should be taken by the student, will be formulated. Practicum is generally deferred by at least one semester. 7. If student impairment is identified as a concern, student services will discuss the impairment policy option with the student. If the student states that they are willing to engage in the impairment process, a

RESPONSIBILITY	PROCEDURE
	<p>written request for review is submitted to the SSW Impairment Committee. The interview process is delayed until the Impairment Process is complete.</p> <p>The student has the right to refuse the impairment process, voluntarily withdraw from the program, or opt for dismissal. The student notifies the MSW Director within 14 academic days from the date of email notification of their decision to participate in the impairment process. Suppose the student does not contact the MSW Director with a decision after 14 days and has not voluntarily withdrawn from the program. In that case, the MSW Director will dismiss the student from the program, notifying the student via email.</p>
MSW Program Director	<p>8. If a determination is made not to allow the student to interview and proceed in practicum due to unethical, dangerous, or extremely inappropriate behavior, the MSW Director sends written notification of this determination to the student via email within 15 academic days. This determination automatically results in dismissal from the program.</p>
Student	<p>9. If not dismissed, can file a grievance with the SSW Committee on Students (if criteria outlined in the Student Handbook are met).</p> <p>10. Can voluntarily withdraw from the program at any time.</p> <p>11. If dismissed from the program, can appeal the decision to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Information about reinstatement can be found in the <u>MSW Student Handbook</u>.</p>
Director of practicum education or Assistant Director of practicum education	<p>12. If a determination is made to allow the student to interview, sends notification letter to student within 10 calendar days, detailing recommendations discussed at the review meeting, including steps that the student should take.</p>
practicum education faculty/staff member responsible for the practicum process	<p>13. Members of the practicum Team discuss with the student the written recommendations detailed at the review meeting before arranging the practicum interview.</p> <p>Members of the practicum Team will make the decision about practicum location based on their assessment of the student's professional development needs. While practicum personnel will attempt to replace a student right away, due to agency availability, it may not be possible to restart practicum until the following semester.</p> <p>Practicum education faculty/staff will identify a practicum interview based on practicum availability and with the student's educational goals in mind. Students will not, however, be able to select particular agencies.</p>

I. PRACTICUM EDUCATION LOG/JOURNAL ASSIGNMENTS (SAMPLE PAGE OF JOURNALING)

Directions:

1. Read pages 2-4 regarding the content of the journal.
2. Before the start of each day, enter your thoughts and feelings related to scheduled activities.
3. At the end of each day, following the journal entry, write 2-3 paragraphs in response to the following questions:
 - a) What did you feel successful in?
 - b) What was challenging for you?
 - c) What were your cognitions (thoughts) and feelings about the views and perspectives of others?
 - d) How did you respond to any feedback that may have been provided to you?
 - e) Can you identify areas of professional development and personal growth related to the day's events?
 - f) From a Social Work perspective, what was your key learning about your work and about yourself?
4. Finally, after completion of each semester, from a Social Work perspective, identify areas of professional development and personal growth (i.e., related to level of self-awareness, insight; related to Social Work roles; related to Social Work theory)?

LOG/JOURNAL FORMAT – INSTRUCTIONS

Description of Activities

Discuss what you actually did during the day.

For example:

- How many clients did you have?
- Were you involved in any supervisory or multidisciplinary meeting?
- What type of documentation did you do?
- Did you study or refer to agency policies for any reason?

In other words, give a run-down of your activities of the day with special focus on those activities that have aided you in increasing your skill and knowledge as a developing social work practitioner.

Feelings

What kinds of personal reactions did you have to the situations you encountered during the week?

Examine both negative and positive reactions.

For example, you might write something like:

My supervisor told me she really appreciates my commitment to professionalism. When I heard that, I felt both proud and thankful. When I hear comments like that, I think to myself that I am going into the right profession.

OR

All day long, we were swamped with crisis calls. One mother needed food for her children, and another lady said she and her baby would be kicked out of their apartment if she didn't get some help with the rent. When I went home, I was drained, and I wondered how some social workers do it.

Values

In this section, discuss how personal values and professional social work values have been taken into consideration during the course of your day.

For example, you might state:

I gained a real understanding of two of the core values of social work: the dignity and worth of the person and the importance of human relationships. I was working with a client who had been on my caseload for one month.

Working together, we have been able to get him over his immediate crisis. I was also able to locate a person who will provide him with therapy at a very affordable rate.

However, my client decided against it. Even though I was a little upset, because I think the therapy could help him a great deal, I remembered the importance of client self-determination in social work. So I told my client that, should he decide in the future that he wants therapy, I would help him locate another therapist.

Integration of Theory and Practice

In this section, you need to look back on all the information you have entered into your log for the day and examine what you have observed or done, while considering how your experiences relate to what you have been learning in the Social Work program.

For example:

During the completion of a bio-psychosocial assessment, you realize that your client is in need of assistance in connecting with services that are available in the community. In remembering what you have learned about ecological systems theory, you remember that people may often experience problems as they interface with the external environment. Therefore, you recognize the need to act as a services broker in helping to link your client with needed services.

OR

Your supervisor states, in a client case staffing, that a particular client has been afraid to confront his boss about unfair treatment at the workplace and has instead been directing his anger at his children, becoming very agitated over easily resolvable issues. From your study of psychoanalytic theory, you recognize that the client's behavior sounds very much like the defense mechanism of displacement.

OR

You may be working with behaviorally different children in a school setting, where you notice that the teacher praises good behavior and ignores disruptive behavior. From your study of behaviorism, you know that behavioral approaches of positive reinforcement combined with extinction are being used in an attempt to modify the student's behavior.

Example of Log/Journal Entry - Practicum Site: A correctional facility for women

Description of Activities

During this week in practicum, I was involved in plans to improve the visiting area for families. I had several individual sessions with clients at my office. I also conducted two groups for women who have chemical dependency problems.

Feelings

Corrections work is very exciting, but it is also very stressful and draining. The other day, I was in the middle of one of my sessions when a “lockdown” was ordered. At first, I was a little worried. I saw six correctional officers run past the window that faces the hall in our group meeting area. A moment later, one of the officers instructed us that we would need to remain locked in our group meeting area until an “all clear” order was issued. At first, the group members began to speculate about what might have happened. Three of the seven group members got up to look out the window. Just then, one of the group members laughed and said, “Let’s get back to work. We wanted a longer group time today, and I guess we got it.” I was glad that happened, because I was concerned I might lose control of the group.

Values

In prison, the value of Dignity and Worth of the Person keeps coming up for me over and over again. So often I hear administrators and officers talk about the inmates as though they were less than human. I know these women have committed crimes, but they are still human beings. I see that social work values are not necessarily shared by other professionals in the prison.

Integration of Theory and Practice

In the women's chemical dependency group, I have come to realize that many are victims of abuse and that they have often turned to drugs to help them cope with feelings of hurt, anger, depression, or loneliness. One inmate stated that her stepfather used to sexually abuse her every night when she was 13 and 14 years old. From that point on, she used drugs to escape her feelings. She became a prostitute at age 15, after running away from home. Hearing such stories makes it hard for me to fully accept the disease model of addiction. I see much more going on in the development of addiction for most of my clients. I take more of a bio-psychosocial approach in understanding addiction among members of my treatment group. I believe that multiple factors of abuse, along with social, emotional, psychological, economic, and gender issues, have contributed greatly, and in concert, to the development of my clients' problems with drugs and/or alcohol.

Coggins, K., & Hatchett, B.F. (2002). *Field practicum: Skill Building from a Multicultural Perspective*. Peosta, Iowa: Eddie Bowers Publishing Co.

UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO SSW: JOURNALING ASSIGNMENT

Name: _____ Date: _____

Before your day begins....

Description of Activities	Values	Integration of Theory and Practice	Feelings
Sample Page			

J. TECHNICAL STANDARDS

Technical Standards for Admission, Promotion, and Graduation

Given the ethical responsibilities of professional social work practice to promote and protect the well-being of the clients and communities we serve, we have established technical standards for students that not only focus on academic performance but also emphasize the abilities and attributes essential for the profession.

The University at Buffalo School of Social Work (UBSSW) is preparing students for careers as professional social workers and to be leaders of social work practice. Becoming a professional social worker is a gradual process and involves a commitment to lifelong learning and self-reflection. The UBSSW is fully committed to supporting and educating students as they prepare to enter the social work profession.

This page describes the technical standards each student must satisfy, in accordance with program requirements, with or without reasonable accommodations, to enroll in, fully participate in, progress through, and graduate from any UBSSW program. These requirements apply in the classroom, in practicum, in our school, in the university, and in the broader community and societal context.

Communication Skills

- Communicate effectively, responsibly, and respectfully in a timely manner in interactions with other students, faculty, practicum instructors, staff, clients, client systems, and other professionals with whom they might come in contact within their student role.
- Demonstrate the capacity to use effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills, including the ability to actively listen, self-reflect, and interpret nonverbal communication of others and self.
- Communicate clearly through verbal and written products at a level appropriate for their stage of education.

Intellectual and Cognitive Ability

- Ability to recall and retain information, think critically, and apply problem-solving skills in an efficient and timely manner.
- Ability to plan, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate, and synthesize information in a timely manner.
- Demonstrate a continual effort to reflect on their own values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, biases, current and past experiences, and make efforts to be inclusive of different cultures and populations.
- Manage time effectively in order to observe deadlines, and conscientiously arrange and keep appointments.
- Ability to navigate transportation to meet practicum and classroom requirements.
- Ability to acquire knowledge, process experiences, and incorporate new information from peers, teachers, and literature in formulating interventions and treatment plans.
- Evaluate and integrate constructive feedback received in both the classroom and practicum settings.

Emotional and Behavioral Professionalism

- Seek appropriate help to ensure that personal issues do not interfere with professional and academic performance.
- Demonstrate the ability to tolerate demanding workloads, adapt to changing environments and situations.
- Maintain respectful and appropriate relationships and boundaries with peers, faculty, practicum instructors, staff, clients and client systems, and other professionals.
- Be punctual and dependable, prioritize responsibilities, manage time, and attend and actively participate in class and practicum in accordance with relevant policy.
- Demonstrate behavior and decisions reflecting the highest standards of honesty and personal, academic, and professional integrity.
- Take responsibility for their own actions and quality of work, and consider the impact of these on others.
- Show the capacity to successfully complete the required practicum hours and demonstrate positive progress in the required social work competencies. The 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (Download PDF) can be accessed in the practicum and classroom settings.

Skills with Technology

- Ability to use computers for searching, recording, storing, and retrieving information.
- Navigate and utilize technologies, such as learning platforms, videoconferencing, library systems, and various software necessary to complete classroom and various assignments.
- Use required practicum agency technology to fulfill the work duties at their practicum site. This technology could include, but is not limited to, the use of computers, telephones, and agency databases.
- Comply with the Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice.

These standards are congruent with the ethical values and standards laid down by the NASW Code of Ethics, which all students must abide by. In addition, students are expected to review and abide by all University at Buffalo and School of Social Work policies and practices. A student can participate in our social work programs so long as they are able to meet these standards, with or without reasonable accommodations. Students who would like to request reasonable accommodations to assist them in meeting these standards should contact: Accessibility Resources, located at 25 Capen Hall, Buffalo, New York 14260.

In addition, please contact UB School of Social Work Student Services if you are having difficulty in meeting the standards while enrolled in the program.

These standards have been reviewed and approved by the UB's Accessibility Resources, the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and the UBSSW Committee on Students.