Recommendations for Practicum Policies

Council of Chairs of Training Councils (CCTC)
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The CCTC Recommendations for Practicum Policies document is intended to assist graduate programs in developing and/or modifying their policies regarding practicum training. Feedback is most welcome (robhatch@umich.edu). This document has a companion document, the CCTC Practicum Definition Document, also available on the CCTC website, at www.psychtrainingcouncils.org. The Practicum Competencies Outline may be accessed at this address as well.

CCTC Practicum Workgroup: Recommendations for Practicum Policies

Categories of Activities Constituting the Practicum

Keeping in mind our definition of the practicum as an educational experience under the auspices of the graduate program, we consider the practicum as comprising the following activities leading to appropriate competencies:

1. **Direct Psychological Service Activities:** These activities may include:
   1.1. Direct service to clients, including individuals, couples, groups, organizations, etc.
   1.2. Interaction/consultation with others on the client's behalf, including
      1.2.1.   Other professionals within the practicum site, such as psychologists, physicians, nurses, social workers, and others.
      1.2.2.   Professionals and systems external to the practicum site, such as current and previous providers, courts, schools, and physicians.
      1.2.3.   Parents, teachers and other caretakers.
2. **Indirect Psychological Service Activities:**
   2.1. Observation of direct service activities.
   2.2. Case Management: Record keeping and report writing related to these activities, client eligibility review, insurance documentation.
   2.3. Coordination of treatment teams in the practicum setting.
   2.4. Outcomes assessment and tracking.
3. **Supervision of Service Activities**:
   3.1. Supervision Received: Supervision of direct and indirect psychological service activities by appropriately qualified staff and faculty.
   3.2. Supervision Received: Formal peer supervision overseen by qualified staff or faculty.
4. **Training Activities[1]:**
   4.1. Seminars/Educational Meetings as part of practicum program.
   4.2. Other preparation: Including use of scientific and professional literature to inform direct service or other professional activities.
   4.3. Presentation and Case Review: Including case presentations, record reviews and quality assurance activities.
5. Additional Professional Activities
   5.1. Program development and evaluation.
   5.2. Outreach
   5.3. Advocacy activities
   5.4. Provision of supervision to others, overseen by qualified staff or faculty.
   5.5. Management/administration of clinical setting.

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[1] These activities are part of the practicum program itself, not of the pre-practicum curriculum (e.g., not an assessment course).

Educational Model and Curriculum Plan

The academic program's curriculum plan[2], based upon its educational model[3], should specifically address practicum training, detailing how the practicum helps to realize the program's educational goals. The plan should include an overall statement of the goals and objectives of practicum training and a description of how these goals and objectives are designed to realize those of the academic program. The curriculum plan should specify how the practicum is integrated with other elements of the program, and ensure that adequate forums are provided for discussion of the practicum experience[4].

Administrative Policies and Procedures for Practicum

The academic program should have a set of administrative policies and procedures designed to provide a structure for achieving the goals and objectives of the program's practicum training.

Administrative policies and procedures should address the following:

1. For Practicum Training Overall

1.1. *The design of the practicum and specification of required experiences.* Across all students, policies should ensure that the sequencing, duration, nature and content of the practicum are appropriate for and consistent with the program's training goals and objectives[5].

1.2. *The selection of practicum sites* consistent with the program's training goals and objectives[6]. These sites should:

1.2.1. Agree to provide training, including sufficient supervision, consistent with the program's training goals and objectives[7];

1.3. *The establishment of formal training contracts* with these sites, including a procedure for specifying a clear, mutual understanding of the agreed-upon goals and objectives of the practicum experience.

1.4. *The evaluation of the practicum training* offered by the sites to ensure high quality experiences.

1.5. *A process for planning, tracking and reviewing* the practicum training experiences of each individual student.

1.6. *Policies and procedures for addressing problems* discovered in reviews of student and site.

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[2] For purposes of integration and coordination, where relevant, reference is made in this document to CoA Guidelines & Principles for Accreditation of Programs in Professional Psychology ("Guidelines"); in this instance, Domain B, Section 3, p. 9: Curriculum Plan.
[3] Guidelines, Domain B. Sections 1 & 2, p. 9.
[4] Guidelines, Domain B, Section 4, Paragraph b, p. 10.
[5] Guidelines, Domain B, Section 4, Paragraph c, p. 10.
[6] Guidelines, Domain C, Section 3, Paragraph f, p. 11.
[7] Guidelines, Domain B, Section 4, Paragraph a, p. 10.

2. For individual students, policies and procedures should ensure that:

2.1. *Each student has an overall written practicum plan* that specifies training goals and a sequence of practicum experiences selected to address these goals. This set of experiences is designed to ensure that the sequencing, duration, nature and content of the practicum are appropriate for and consistent with the student's educational needs and goals[8]. This plan will reflect the program's training goals and objectives, and is expected to evolve during the course of the student's educational experience[9].

2.2. *Each student's progress is reviewed* at least yearly (see 1.5 above).

2.3. *Each student receives the training experiences specified in the practicum plan* as implemented through the program's written training contracts with the practicum sites (see 1.3 above).

2.4. *A clear process exists to provide each student with* feedback throughout the course of the practicum regarding her or his achievement of the levels of competence expected in the plan.

2.4.1. *Failure to achieve competence.* Should a student fail to achieve competence in a particular area or areas, additional steps should be undertaken in accordance with the program's policies on remediation.

2.5. *A central cumulative record is established for each student* that contains the student's practicum plan, the activities undertaken in practicum as part of the plan, and the level of achieved competence as specified in the plan.

2.6. *Feedback/review of the student by the site* occurs at least twice during each practicum experience. This review will monitor the student's fulfillment of the practicum contract and level of achievement of the expected competencies. Students should receive direct written feedback regarding their performance.

2.7. *Feedback is obtained from the student regarding the practicum experience* and the site early and again later during the practicum experience, so as to assess the sites' fulfillment of the practicum contract, and to pursue changes needed in the event problems become apparent.

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[8] See Guidelines, Domain B, Section 4, Paragraph b, p. 10.

[9] The format for the plan could range from a document specifically written for an individual student, to an individualized plan created with a template based on program-wide training goals and objectives. The plan may well change as the student's goals and objectives evolve.