

**Practicum Guidelines  
HE 685**

**Higher Education Program  
College of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Introduction**

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The practicum (HE 685) is an essential part of the Higher Education degree program. It is a supervised on-the-job experience in an approved college or university setting or public agency involved with higher education.

Such experience can include:

- Gaining experience in a particular higher education unit
- Assisting with or attending higher education study abroad tours
- Participating in academic community outreach; or
- Participating in field work such as grant-funded research data collection

This document assists the student and the supervisors in managing the practicum by describing practicum requirements, procedures for applying for practicum placement, policies, roles and responsibilities of those involved, and the practicum seminar component and by providing forms and materials. It also ensures that the University supervisor, the student and the on-site supervisor are aware of both legal and academic aspects of a practicum.

The Higher Education Program practicum is based on the most current Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education criteria for Master's programs in Student Affairs. A practicum takes place in an approved educational setting under the supervision of the practicum coordinator and a qualified site supervisor. The practicum site supervisor must be a qualified practitioner in student affairs administration or higher education. The practicum experience should draw on current research, practice, policy and ethical guidelines for the profession to enhance student learning. This training provides students with the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge and develop an understanding of the relationship between theory and practice. Practicum also introduces the student to the work environment and current educational issues and trends; provides an opportunity to develop professional and personal competencies important to the identity of a higher education/student affairs professional; and helps clarify professional employment and educational goals.

**Practicum Requirements**

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***Prerequisites:***

- Prior to a practicum, the student must have earned a minimum of 9 credits of Higher Education courses.

*These courses must be completed with a grade "B" or higher.* In order to begin the practicum, you must be a student in good standing.

### ***Practicum Proposal:***

All decisions pertaining to the planning and conducting of a practicum experience must be completed in consultation with a site supervisor, the practicum course instructor, and the student's advisor. The following are guidelines as you consider your practicum proposal:

- Develop a resume to share with potential practicum site supervisors.
- Identify a potential practicum site and site supervisor.
- With the site supervisor's assistance, complete the *Request for Approval of Practicum* form. This proposal will lay out the agreement between the student and the supervisor, defining the learning outcomes and expectations, proposed site work schedule, schedule for supervision, training requirements, and how the student will be evaluated. (Full-time employees as well as Graduate Assistants will need to be particularly thoughtful about planning an experience that provides a different/new set of learning outcomes.)
- Schedule an appointment to meet with advisor to discuss proposed practicum.
- Submit resume and *Request for Approval of Practicum* form for approval to [hepadmin@gmu.edu](mailto:hepadmin@gmu.edu) by one of the following deadlines:
  - Summer: March 1**
  - Fall: July 1**
  - Spring: November 1**
- Upon approval from the program, register for the Higher Education Practicum, HE 685.

### ***Identifying a Practicum Site:***

- A student must satisfy the practicum requirement by completing a minimum of 150 hours of field experience at one site.
- Sites must be aligned with learning and career goals and/or student's past experiences
- Students are responsible for finding their own practicum placement sites. The Higher Education program maintains a list of college/university departments or offices that have expressed interest in practicum students or have had practicum students in the past. Practicum sites must have a qualified professional on-site supervisor and must offer a supervised experience that meets the program criteria and the student's personal and professional goals. Criteria for approved sites are listed below. Upon obtaining a tentative commitment from the site supervisor, the student completes and submits a Higher Education Practicum Application to [hepadmin@gmu.edu](mailto:hepadmin@gmu.edu). *Final approval of a practicum site is made by the practicum course instructor.*

#### Possible practicum sites:

Academic advising  
Academic departments  
Admissions  
Learning services  
Assessment  
Career services  
Dean of students  
Disability services  
Diversity programs and services  
Education association headquarters

Faculty research  
Financial aid  
Housing/Residential Life  
International programs and services  
Off-Campus Student Services  
Orientation and Family Programs  
Student activities  
Student affairs/university life  
administration  
Student athlete advising

Student involvement  
Student leadership  
Service learning  
Student support and advocacy  
Student unions

Study abroad  
Title IX compliance  
Wellness/violence/alcohol education  
Women's center

Criteria for Approved Sites:

- The site demonstrates a commitment to training, education, and development, and a clearly articulated philosophy, which includes ideas about how to introduce “novice” practitioners to new knowledge and skill areas, how to assess students’ progress, and how to address possible concerns.
- The site has developed or works with the student to create a position description for the field experience that includes the types of services, activities, and projects and the nature of the clients with which the student will be involved. The agency must assure that students will have breadth as well as depth of experience in higher education administration or student affairs.
- The site and those designated as supervisors are in compliance with professional ethics standards and practice guidelines published by the Council for the Advancement of Standards and by the association representing their particular profession. A set of those professional standards must be provided to and reviewed with the student.

Criteria for Approved Supervisors:

- The site supervisor must have an earned master’s degree in higher education or a related field.
- The supervisor provides a minimum of at least one hour of on-site individual supervision per week.
- Supervisor has to have been at site for at least one year
- Ideally supervisor would not directly supervise practicum student at place of employment (Discuss any questions with practicum coordinator).

Restrictions on Sites and Practicum:

- Students may not train in settings in which they are employed. If the student is employed by a large agency or organization, the practicum may be completed in that agency. The student may be asked to provide an organizational chart illustrating the reporting structure.
- Students may receive compensation for their practicum activities.

***Student Evaluations:***

Students will be evaluated by their supervisors at the culmination of their practicum experience. The evaluations are returned to the practicum course instructor by the supervisor after the student and supervisor have had an opportunity to review the form together. The student must sign the evaluation form; the signature is an indication that the student has reviewed and received the evaluation.

***Site Evaluations:***

Students will have the opportunity to provide feedback on their practicum site.

## Roles and Responsibilities in the Practicum

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### ***Students***

1. Complete and submit by deadlines all practicum forms and materials.
2. Adhere to principles and practices for professional, legal and ethical conduct. Consult the *CAS Standards* as well as current practice guidelines for the profession with which the site is affiliated.
3. Develop respectful relationships with staff and clients.
4. Report on time and maintain the agreed upon work schedule. Clear vacation or other leave times with the supervisor in advance and with sufficient notice. Contact the supervisor as soon as possible when an unexpected absence or delay in arrival occurs. Discuss expectations surrounding academic breaks.
5. Maintain a log of practicum hours. Complete the requisite number of hours during the agreed upon time period. Have the site supervisor sign this log.
6. Actively solicit feedback from the supervisor and/or others involved with the training and learning experience. Engage in self-reflection of performance and learning experiences.
7. Maintain weekly journal entries.
8. Prepare a final portfolio, including the following components:
  - Weekly journal entries that document learning experiences and projects, as well as reflections and goals for problem situations
  - Materials developed as part of the internship experience
  - Additional evidence of meeting learning objectives
  - 3-4 page paper reflecting on how this experiential learning opportunity has helped develop awareness of issues in higher education (references to higher education coursework are expected)
  - Written mentor evaluation (rubric developed with practicum coordinator)
9. Immediately inform supervisor and/or practicum coordinator if they encounter any difficulties.
10. Make effective use of supervision by preparing for supervision sessions, bringing relevant materials to sessions, and formulating discussion questions. Be responsive to direction, guidance, and constructive feedback from the supervisor and integrate the guidance and feedback into work at the site.