



*Master of Clinical/ Counseling  
Psychology Program*

Practicum Handbook

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Graduate students enrolled in the Clayton State University Master of Clinical/Counseling Psychology program who have completed a minimum of 30 credit hours, are required to successfully complete a 10-12 month clinical practicum placement during the second year of their training. The goal of the practicum experience is to allow for students to enhance their professional development via application and integration of classroom theory and training in the context of supervised clinical work experiences. Practicum training also allows for engagement in meaningful work related to your professional identity as a clinician in training. With the support of the practicum coordinator, students have the responsibility of identifying the training site and related experience that best meets their needs and objectives.

Concurrent with the clinical training at community sites, students are required to enroll in a Practicum course sequence, offered the fall and spring of their second year. This course is designed to develop and enhance student's professional identity as a clinician, explore common challenges and ethical considerations in practice, and help students refine case-conceptualization skills pertaining to clinical practice. The practicum course is taught by CSU graduate clinical faculty. The course *does not* provide supervision for clinical hours. Clinical hours and related experiences are supervised by a licensed professional counselor, clinical social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist at the student's practicum site. Students keep a log of all practicum hours and those hours must be approved by site supervisors.

The delineation of the practicum instructor and practicum coordinator's roles is provided in **Appendix A**.

## II. ELIGIBILITY / REQUIREMENTS

- A. *Course Prerequisites*. Prerequisites for the Clinical Practicum I course include: PSYC 5170 (Advanced Psychopathology) with a minimum grade of C, PSYC 5160 (The Helping Relationship) with a minimum grade of C, and PSYC 5350 Adv. Psychopathology & Diagnosis. The student must also have permission of the graduate program director and practicum coordinator.
- B. *Course Corequisites*. Students must enroll in three hours of credit each semester of the second year. It is strongly desired and recommended that Practicum I is completed concurrently with PSYC 5150 (Group Therapy) and Practicum II completed concurrently with PSYC 5180 (Advanced Theories & Practice of Psychotherapy). Further, to remain in the practicum class, students should acquire a practicum site by the drop/add period and be actively acquiring hours at that site no later than the midpoint of their fall semester. This allows students to avoid academic repercussions, such as not obtaining the required hours, necessary to pass the course.
- C. *Program Evaluation*. At the end of the first semester of training, students will be evaluated by the Graduate Clinical Committee comprised of clinical faculty on their practicum readiness. In addition to adequate progress in semester coursework, this evaluation is based upon areas of professional development such as professionalism, awareness and sensitivity to

cultural diversity, ethical conduct, interpersonal skills including communication and affective management. Students will be notified by January 15<sup>th</sup> of their eligibility to apply for practicum.

D. *Clinical Practicum Requirements.* Our program requires completion of 600 supervised hours of clinical work experience (this corresponds to an average of 20 hours per week, 40% direct patient care). The required 600 hours are to be completed by the end of the spring of the second year and must be approved by the student's site supervisor prior to completion. A minimum of 201 approved hours must be achieved by the end of the Clinical Practicum I course (fall semester) with the remaining hours obtained in Practicum II (spring semester). Students are required to receive weekly supervision (45-50 min) while completing their practicum. Thus, of the 40% indirect hours, a minimum of 30 hours is required to be dedicated to supervision with the assigned supervisor.

E. These are minimum practicum training requirements across the first and second semesters of practicum. These requirements do not prevent students from committing to longer practicum periods, pending the approval of the clinical and practicum coordinators.

The curriculum is designed so that students attend class on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with the understanding that students are expected to fulfill practicum requirements outside of these days. To ensure parity across training experiences, the sites must meet the specific **training requirements** outlined in **Appendix B**. All practicum sites must be reviewed and approved by the practicum coordinator to ensure that training requirements can be accommodated.

F. *Practicum Site Requirements/Expectations.*

#### General Practicum Structure

CSU has specific guidelines as outlined above for practicum. However, there may be additional site-specific policies, regulations, and requests to which the student must comply. Students should be sure to check with each individual site to find out their requirements. Many sites require a 10-month/15-20 hours a week commitment from students, while other sites may require a 12 month commitment<sup>1</sup>. Please note that many sites do not follow the university calendar. As such, students are expected to work during semester breaks or other times when the student is not required to be in engaged in course-related school activities. Students must follow the HR procedures and policies for the practicum site. Students should treat the practicum as a work experience and use professional decorum while at the training site.

Students are expected to engage in training at their practicum site a minimum of 12 hours a week and a maximum of 30 hours (an average of 20 hours is typical). Students are required to log all of their practicum hours via the electronic tracking system, Time2Track. Students are responsible for submitting these hours to their supervisors for approval in the Time2Track electronic system.

#### Required Liability Insurance

All students must purchase professional liability insurance that covers the practicum training period

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<sup>1</sup> Student are strongly encouraged to work towards obtaining the 600 hours before May. However, it is normative for students to continue to work towards their 600 hour practicum requirement in the summer.

before they will be allowed to go on practicum. Students must provide both the site and the practicum coordinator with documentation of coverage. Students should check with the specific site to find out the amounts of coverage, however, typical coverage is in the amounts of \$1,000,000 (claim)/\$3,000,000 (aggregate). The school does not provide the liability coverage and, although select sites will provide coverage for their practicum students/interns, most require the student to provide coverage. Students who are members of the American Counseling Association receive coverage included with their membership dues. Other professional organizations may offer the same benefit. Students may wish to check with their professional organizations prior to purchasing coverage. Also, because coverage must be renewed annually, to avoid having to buy additional coverage student should ensure their coverage starts the first day of training. Students will also need to sign a student agreement as part of the agreement that CSU develops with each practicum site (referred to as a Memorandum of Understanding or MOU).

### III. EVALUATION

Successful completion of practicum is contingent upon receiving satisfactory evaluations of clinical performance and professionalism while on practicum and receiving a satisfactory grade in the practicum class. Grading for the practicum course is either Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory and determined based upon input from site supervisors and performance in the class. Further, to remain in the practicum class, students should acquire a practicum site by the drop/add period and be actively acquiring hours at that site no later than the midpoint of their fall semester. This allows students to avoid academic repercussions, such as not obtaining the required hours, necessary to pass the course.

Site supervisors are requested to complete an evaluation form on students two times during the nine-month practicum. The first evaluation will occur early in the training so that any professional challenges can be addressed. The last evaluation will occur at the end of the practicum experience. Students will be evaluated on their progress with respect to their knowledge and skill development, treatment planning, case-conceptualization, documentation, quality of therapeutic relationship and counseling skills, rapport with their supervisor and responsiveness to feedback. Other aspects of professionalism such as punctuality, accountability, professional decorum, collegiality, and multicultural sensitivity are also reflected in the evaluation process. The specific evaluation parameters are outlined in the **practicum evaluation form** found in **Appendix C**. This evaluation form is completed electronically and site supervisors are responsible for discussing the student's evaluations and/or progress with them.

### IV. PREPARING FOR PRACTICUM

Acquiring a practicum training experience is the student's responsibility. Therefore, the student's preparation and active participation is the key to success. The practicum coordinator will assist students by providing them with a list of approved practicum sites to which students may apply. Students will also receive information about other potential sites, but must be aware that if the site has not been vetted by the coordinator that it may not be accepted for course credit. If a student desires to apply to a non-approved site, he/she should speak with the practicum coordinator or other faculty in the department to help evaluate options and consideration. Most sites have application deadline dates for application and only accept practicum students/interns once a year.

\*\*Please note that even if sites would like for students to begin sooner, students must have completed the prerequisites for practicum before they can begin work at a site and must be enrolled in the practicum course. The earliest a student can start practicum is on August 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

## V. THE PRACTICUM EVALUATION PROCESS

Although some practicum sites require students to place a formal application through their HR departments, the initial contact is usually with the training director for the site. Upon identifying potential training sites and their application deadlines, students should contact the training director and send a cover letter expressing their interest, along with our department's training objectives, and the student's curriculum vita.

As students are considering practicum options, they are encouraged to update their resumes and begin drafting their cover letters. The practicum application process is very competitive and students are competing with students from other institutions across Georgia and even some students from out-of-state. Therefore, our department would like to assist you in developing the strongest application possible. To this end, students are required to utilize the Clayton State University Career Services Office support their application process. Specifically, students are required to submit their resume and cover letter to their office. The Career Services staff will review and edit these documents for the students' consideration prior to submitting the information to the sites. Students are eligible to apply to sites after they have received approval from the Graduate Program Director and will start applying to sites no later than February 15<sup>th</sup>. Students who are engaged in remediation plans due to concerns regarding academic performance or professional conduct will have a later start date.

Those students who are selected for practicum/internship training are usually notified within a month of their interview. Sample **interview questions** that may assist you with preparing for the interview process can be found in **Appendix D**.

## VI. SUMMARY

This practicum handbook is to serve as a *guide* to assist you with acquiring and preparing for your practicum experience. It is subject to change pending changes in departmental policies and training requirements. Students will be notified of any changes to the information herein. For your convenience, a practicum checklist is provided as a tool to assist you as you take steps toward this important stage in your clinical training. If you have questions about practicum, do not hesitate to contact the practicum coordinator and/or the program director. A summary timeline of practicum activities is included in Appendix E.

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## **Practicum Checklist**

### *Before Applying to Practicum*

- Review the Practicum Handbook and clarify any remaining questions.
- Attend the Practicum Process Orientation hosted in the fall. Contact Dr. Christina Grange @ [cgrange@clayton.edu](mailto:cgrange@clayton.edu) (678-466-4732) if you have remaining questions after attending orientation.
- Complete your curriculum vita/resume and cover letter. Take/Submit your curriculum vita/resume to the CSU Career Services Office, obtain feedback, and integrate relevant feedback into your documents.
- Research potential sites to determine (as much as possible) if they meets major training objectives as outlined in the training requirements document.
- Prepare for the practicum interviewing process (e.g. practice with peers or faculty, review potential interview questions, etc.).

### *Interview Process*

- Ask questions to clarify the process for weekly clinical supervision and who would be the supervisor.
- Clarify site expectations regarding weekly clinical hour requirements.
- Inquire about if the site can make accommodations for orientation, work schedule, and supervision that do not conflict with your academic courses.
- Clarify if there are any associated onboarding fees of which students should be aware.
- Ensure that you will be able to work a minimum of 20 hours (averaging 8-10 direct clinical hours) a week across 2-3 days.

### *After Accepting the Practicum Position*

- Acquire professional liability insurance before your first day of practicum.
- Provide the practicum coordinator and site supervisor with documentation of insurance coverage.

### *After Starting Practicum*

- Register for Time2Track account and complete set up with practicum instructor.
- Sign the Student Learning Agreement.
- Review the CSU training requirements with site supervisor and discuss how training requirements will be met.
- Discuss the site's expectations and ensure that they are reasonable and appropriate for your training experience (e.g. students should not be engaged in excessive administrative tasks unrelated to their primary duties/training, marketing efforts, etc. for the site).
- Use Time2Track to keep a detailed log of practicum training hours that specifies time spent in direct patient care activities, administrative activities, and supervision (type/format)
- Weekly have supervisor approve documented practicum hours in Time2Track.
- Complete any requirements associated with the practicum course

## APPENDIX A

### Practicum Coordinator and Practicum Instructor Roles and Responsibilities

Outside of your standard course instructors, there are three roles that are important for your practicum training experience.

**Graduate Program Director:** Oversees the overall administration of the Master of Science in Clinical/Counseling Psychology program. Supports the Practicum Coordinator in developing guidelines governing practicum expectations. Available to support student efforts to secure a practicum site when needed. Student's first contact should be the Practicum Coordinator, however, if there are concerns beyond the Practicum Coordinator's scope, the next step is contacting the program director.

**Practicum Coordinator:** Serves an administrative role and provides students with information about the practicum application process and requirements. Students typically communicate with the coordinator as they identify, apply for, and prepare for placement. Continue to serve as the point of contact for students and practicum site supervisors/leadership for the duration of the practicum training period. Any information about the site or the student should be communicated to the practicum coordinator.

**Practicum Course Instructor:** During the year students initiate their practicum, students will engage with the faculty member who serves as the instructor for the practicum course. In this role, the Practicum instructor monitors students' progress and addresses any specific concerns as they relate to student performance. The instructor does not engage with the practicum site; concerns, crises, significant changes, etc. are required to go through the Practicum Coordinator. The instructor does not review hours in Time2Track.

It is important to understand the differences between the Practicum Coordinator role and the Practicum Course Instructor roles – but it is easy to get the roles confused. The practicum coordinator and practicum instructor both play instrumental roles in the oversight and management of the supervised clinical training experience required for completion of the Master of Psychology degree. However, they do have distinct duties. Examples of these different responsibilities is outlined below.

<u>Practicum Coordinator</u>	<u>Practicum Instructor</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Students will typically communicate with the coordinator as they identify, apply, and prepare for placements</li><li>2. Prepares and orients students to participate in the year-long practicum experiences, including assistance with developing and refining their CVs and cover letters and preparing for interviews</li><li>3. Ensuring that students meet prerequisite program requirements before starting</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Teaches practicum course</li><li>2. Monitors student progress at their respective sites via evaluations from supervisors</li><li>3. Communicates with practicum sites regarding professional and clinical issues pertaining to students rotating at the sites</li><li>4. Provides feedback to students pertaining to professional issues related to their performance on practicum</li></ol>

<p>practicum</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Develops and maintains database of potential practicum sites that is shared with students</li> <li>5. Screens, selects, and approve practicum sites that meet program educational requirements</li> <li>6. Develop MOUs with practicum sites and maintains ongoing relationships with sites</li> <li>7. Oversee student evaluation process at the practicum sites</li> <li>8. Ensure students understand site requirements for liability insurance, background checks, etc. before beginning practicum.</li> <li>9. Maintains records of student learning agreements with internship sites</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Based upon performance in practicum course and at practicum site, assigns grade for clinical practicum</li> </ol>
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## **Appendix B**

### **Practicum Training Requirements**

Clayton State University's Master of Clinical Psychology program emphasizes learning to consider the uniqueness of each individual and the influence of culture and ethnicity when providing clinical services. We train our students so that they may become Licensed Professional Counselors upon completion of the program. Prior to beginning their practicum experience, students must complete an advanced psychopathology & diagnosis course, two psychological assessment courses, a course in foundational clinical skills, and a theories and practice of psychotherapy course. They complete a second therapeutic intervention course (Group Therapy) concurrent with their practicum experience. Our program requires students to complete 600 supervised hours of clinical work (an average of 20 hours per week, with 40% direct patient care). These are minimum training requirements that in no way prevent students from committing to longer internship/practicum periods. However, students are restricted from working more than 30 hours (direct and indirect hours total) per week. The following list outlines our educational objectives and criteria for student's practicum experiences.

#### **Educational Objectives**

The student will gain experience in:

- Individual therapy (**required**)
- Conducting psychosocial intake interviews or assessments (**required**)
- Participating in staffing and/or treatment team consultation (**required**)
- Assessment (this can include administering standardized surveys, inventories, checklists or questionnaires) (preferred)
- Writing progress/treatment notes or summaries (**required**)
- Working with groups either through a psycho-educational workshop or therapy (preferred)
- Working with diverse populations (preferred)

#### **Site Criteria**

The practicum site will:

- Provide formal supervision weekly for 45-50 minutes by a designated licensed supervisor (individual supervision preferred as appropriate to the site)
- Supervision must be provided by a licensed professional counselor, MFT, social worker, psychologist or psychiatrist who is three years post-licensure
- Provide diversity in clinical experiences
- Report any problems or concerns with the student to the Clinical Practicum Coordinator or Practicum Course Instructor
- Complete quarterly evaluation forms for the student
- Provide appropriate space for performance of practicum duties
- Provide an average of 20 hours of clinical experiences per week.

Per licensure board requirements, licensed supervisors holding LPC, LMFT, or LCSW credentials must be three years post-licensure to provide supervision. Supervisors with a Ph.D. in clinical or counseling psychology must have been credentialed for 1 year. If you have questions or concerns, please contact our practicum coordinator, Dr. C. Grange @ [cgrange@clayton.edu](mailto:cgrange@clayton.edu) or by phone at 678-466-4732.

**APPENDIX C**  
**CSU Practicum Evaluation Form**

Please select your organization from the list below.

Please select the student intern.

SUPERVISOR'S NAME/CREDENTIAL:

Please complete the following evaluation for the period, MM/DD/YY to MM/DD/YY based upon your expectations for performance at the trainee's current level of training/experience. Please explain any evaluative responses that "Does Not Meet Expectations" or "Not Observed" in the space provided.

Q1 . Understands and follows the practicum site's systems/processes.

- Exceeds expectations
- Meets expectations
- Does not meet expectations/Needs improvement \_\_\_\_\_
- Not observed \_\_\_\_\_

Q2 . Effectively works with staff, including supervisor.

- Exceeds expectations
- Meets expectations
- Does not meet expectations/Needs improvement \_\_\_\_\_
- Not observed

Q3. Openness and responsiveness to feedback.

- Exceeds expectations
- Meets expectations
- Does not meet expectations/Needs improvement \_\_\_\_\_
- Not observed \_\_\_\_\_

Q4. Understands and demonstrates professional ethics and boundaries.

- Exceeds expectations
- Meets expectations
- Does not meet expectations/Needs improvement \_\_\_\_\_
- Not observed \_\_\_\_\_

Q5. Understanding of diagnosis and assessment.

- Exceeds expectations
- Meets expectations
- Does not meet expectations/Needs improvement \_\_\_\_\_
- Not observed \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX C (Cont'd)**  
**CSU Practicum Evaluation Form**

Q6. Ability to develop an appropriate treatment plan.

- Exceeds expectations
- Meets expectations
- Does not meet expectations/Needs improvement \_\_\_\_\_
- Not observed \_\_\_\_\_

Q7. Establishes and maintains therapeutic relationships with clients/patients.

- Exceeds expectations
- Meets expectations
- Does not meet expectations/Needs improvement \_\_\_\_\_
- Not observed \_\_\_\_\_

Q8. Individual therapy skills.

- Exceeds expectations
- Meets expectations
- Does not meet expectations/Needs improvement \_\_\_\_\_
- Not Observed \_\_\_\_\_

Q9. Group therapy skills.

- Exceeds expectations
- Meets expectations
- Does not meet expectations/Needs improvement \_\_\_\_\_
- Not Observed \_\_\_\_\_

Q10. Written skills (progress notes/reports).

- Exceeds expectations
- Meets expectations
- Does not meet expectations/Needs improvement \_\_\_\_\_
- Not Observed \_\_\_\_\_

Q11. Ability to articulate case dynamics in supervision or case conferences.

- Exceeds expectations
- Meets expectations
- Does not meet expectations/Needs improvement \_\_\_\_\_
- Not Observed \_\_\_\_\_

Q12. Overall evaluation of trainee's performance.

- Exceeds expectations
- Meets expectations
- Does not meet expectations/Needs improvement \_\_\_\_\_
- Not Observed \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D: SAMPLE PRACTICUM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why are you interested in a career in psychology? What led you into the field of counseling?
2. What are your professional goals for this practicum?
3. What are your clinical interests or goals?
4. What are your long-range and short-range goals and objectives?
5. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
6. What theoretical orientations have you been exposed to? Which one or ones do you find appealing or feel reflects your perspective?
7. What can you bring to this practicum?
8. What are your expectations about your practicum?
9. What activities would you be interested in pursuing during the practicum?
10. What are the requirements for your program? (# hours week/direct care; types of experiences; and supervision-See training requirements)
11. Which of our rotations/units (or types of services we offer) appeals to you?
12. What are your experiences in working with diverse populations?
13. What do you think it would be like working in/or with ... (fill in whatever is relevant to the site, such as inpatient unit, substance abuse, seriously mentally ill, low income)? What are your concerns?
14. How would you determine if a patient is in crisis and requires involuntary hospitalization?
15. How would you handle such a situation if it arises? (Suicide assessment/dangerousness to self/others)
16. What do you consider your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
17. How do you think a friend or previous employer would describe you?
18. If I talk to your peers, what would they say about you that are different from what you think about yourself?
19. What do you look for in supervision?
20. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and a supervisee?
21. How do you handle feedback (from teachers, peers or supervisors) about areas for

improvement?

22. What are important elements of teamwork?
23. Give an example a conflict that arose at one of your previous jobs or during your training and tell me what you did to address it?
24. How will you establish boundaries in your work as a counselor? They may give hypothetical situation and ask how you would address it.
25. Tell me an ethical issue you have studied or had to deal with? They may give hypothetical situation and ask how you would address it.
26. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
27. What are your experiences/training with assessment tools (or diagnostic interviews/psychosocial interviews, etc.)?
28. What will your schedule be? Can you work evening hours?
29. We expect practicum students to document their work with clients in a timely fashion. How are you with deadlines?
30. How would you handle a situation where you had notes due but your allotted hours for the day had ended?
31. Do you have any questions? (Always have at least one question ready that is specific to the site.)

## **APPENDIX E: SUMMARY TIMELINE OF PRACTICUM ACTIVITIES**

October First Year: Practicum Process Orientation

January First Year: Submit resume for review to career services

February First Year: Receive approval to begin applying to practicum sites

Spring First Year: Apply to practicum sites

August 1 Second Year: Earliest date to start practicum

October 1 Second Year: Latest Date to Start Practicum

May Second Year: Complete the practicum experience