



*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 starting the second year of their training or later. 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 with the the initial course only offered in fall semester and the second course in spring semester. 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 the three credit hour practicum course during each semester of their practicum 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. *Evaluation of Practicum Readiness.* At the end of the first and second semesters of academic 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. However, failure to maintain adherence to program requirements and expectations can result in this approval being rescinded. This can occur if the graduate committee agrees that the student's recent behavior suggests problematic ethical decision-making and/or lack of clinical competence is potentially harmful to clients.

D. *Clinical Practicum Requirements.* Our program requires completion of 600 supervised hours of clinical work experience, including 40% direct patient services. (this corresponds to an average of 20 hours per week). 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 (60 min) while completing their practicum. Thus, of the 60% indirect hours, a minimum of 30 hours is required to be dedicated to supervision with the assigned supervisor. Direct hours must represent 40% or more of the clinical training experience. Additional details regarding required hours per semester is provided in the syllabus for Practicum I (fall) and Practicum II (spring).

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 and Appendix C**. 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 commitment¹. 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

¹ 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.

responsible for submitting these hours to their supervisors for approval in the Time2Track electronic system. Hours should be submitted to supervisors at a minimum of every two weeks. It is the students's responsibility to ensure that supervisors have access to these hours and approve them in a timely fashion – at minimum every two weeks.

Required Liability Insurance

All students must purchase professional liability insurance that covers the practicum training period before they will be allowed to go on practicum. Students must provide both the site and the practicum coordinator with a PDF copy of the "Certificate of Liability Insurance" that includes details of the coverage included in the policy. 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. ACQUIRING A PRACTICUM SITE

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 as a resource to support the search process. Students will also receive information about other potential sites, but must be aware that if the site has not been approved 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.

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. They should also include the Practicum Requirements (**Appendix C**) list, 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 students 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 Career Services for review. 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:

1. Had their resume reviewed by Career Services and submitted proof to the Practicum

Coordinator and

2. Received approval from the Graduate Program Director early in the spring semester

Students can start applying to sites no later than February 15th. 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**.

****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 1st of each year.**

IV. EVALUATION

Successful completion of practicum is contingent upon (1) receiving satisfactory evaluations of clinical performance and professionalism while on practicum and (2) receiving a satisfactory grade in each of the practicum courses. 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 I course, 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 10-12 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 E**. This evaluation form is completed electronically and site supervisors are responsible for discussing the student's evaluations and/or progress with them.

Students receive feedback about their supervisor evaluation the first week of their Practicum II course. The Practicum coordinator sends this feedback via email. If there are any significant concerns, students will have a meeting with the practicum coordinator to devise a plan for addressing these concerns during the second portion of practicum. The Practicum II instructor will also receive this feedback so that they can be informed as they support students during the spring course.

V. CONCLUDING PRACTICUM

Periodically there are practicum experiences that conclude in April if students have acquired all hours, sites approve, and if those hours have been signed off by supervisors. In these cases, the earliest that the practicum experience can end is April 15th. Concluding the practicum experience includes, but is not limited to the steps indicated in The Practicum Process Checklist (**Appendix F**). Other requirements may be presented by individual sites:

1. Notify the site of the anticipated end date (providing at least 30 days notice) and get this anticipated date approved by the site.
2. Email the practicum coordinator regarding plans to discontinue practicum. Include the specific end date.
3. Provide the site with a copy of the Practicum Verification Form and obtain a completed copy of the form from the site.
4. Students complete the Practicum Evaluation Form to share insights about their practicum experiences.
5. Receive a confirmation email from the practicum coordinator indicating that 600 hours have been achieved and approved by the site supervisor.

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 G**.

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 regarding practicum specific concerns 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">1. Students will typically communicate with the coordinator as they identify, apply, and prepare for placements2. 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 interviews3. Ensuring that students meet prerequisite program requirements before starting practicum4. Develops and maintains database of potential	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Teaches practicum course2. Monitors student progress at their respective sites via evaluations from supervisors3. Communicates with practicum sites regarding professional and clinical issues pertaining to students rotating at the sites4. Provides feedback to students pertaining to professional issues related to their performance on practicum5. Based upon performance in practicum course and at practicum site, assigns

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

Practicum Training Requirements – Educational Objectives

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)

Appendix C:
Clayton State University MSCCP General Practicum Requirements

1. Students need 600 hours over a minimum of 9 months (August 1st to May 31st)
2. Students need a minimum of 3 individual clients at any given time
3. Sites must provide 1 hour of individual clinical supervision per week
4. There must be a licensed counselor, social worker, or psychologist on staff (they must be fully licensed a minimum of 3 years at the master's level or 1 year at the doctoral level; the supervisor does not have to be a full-time employee of the agency)
 - a. The site is required to furnish the name and licensure status of the clinical supervisor before the student starts
5. Sites must have licensed or licensure eligible professionals on site with the student at all times (this person does not have to be the formal supervisor but needs to be someone who can provide assistance if the student has a client in crisis or some other unforeseen clinical circumstance arises where the student will need guidance)
6. Maintenance of hours are held in an online system, Time2Track, and supervisors should approve hours regularly throughout the semester
7. Site supervisor will have to complete a formal evaluation of student progress at least twice per year. In December and May
8. Students will provide their own malpractice insurance
9. Students are not allowed to provide in home therapy
10. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) expires after 5 years but sites have the right to request the MOU for a lesser term. Please note, our MOU's aren't binding in the sense that you must take our students each year. The five-year period simply eases the process for the sites that do offer placement every year.
11. Unless the student has behaved unethically, endangered clients and/or staff, or has severe/chronic issues with professionalism sites must give 60 days' notice before terminating a student due to site related issues. In instances where 60 days may not be attainable, site must make efforts to reassign students within the agency when available.
 - a. Sites can terminate the student immediately if he/she engages in the behavior mentioned above and 60 days' notice is not expected.
12. Sites are required to make provisions for recording (audio or video) sessions for periodic review as part of clinical supervision.
13. Complete practicum student evaluations and provide related feedback to students directly.
14. Sites must limit supervision to three trainees during one-hour periods.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact our practicum coordinator, Dr. C. Grange - cgrange@clayton.edu or by phone at 678-466-4732.

Appendix D: Sample Practicum Interview Questions

1. What motivated you to pursue a career in counseling?
2. Why are you interested in this practicum site?
3. What are your goals for this practicum experience?
4. How do you define success in a counseling relationship?
5. What is your theoretical orientation, and how did you arrive at it?
6. How would you approach working with a client experiencing anxiety (or depression, trauma, etc.)?
7. What strategies do you use for setting boundaries with clients?
8. How do you approach working with clients from backgrounds different from your own?
9. Tell us about a time you recognized your own bias in a professional or academic setting.
10. How do you integrate cultural competence into your counseling practice?
11. What would you do if a client disclosed suicidal thoughts?
12. How would you handle a dual relationship or potential conflict of interest?
13. What steps do you take to maintain confidentiality?
14. How do you respond to feedback or supervision?
15. What do you see as your strengths and areas for growth as a developing counselor?
16. How do you manage stress or emotional challenges from client work?
17. Describe a difficult interpersonal situation and how you handled it?
18. Are you able to meet the time and scheduling requirements of this site?
19. What population(s) are you most interested in working with, and why?
20. How do you handle administrative tasks such as case notes or documentation?

Appendix E: 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 E (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 F: Practicum Process Checklist

Practicum Process 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 (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 G: 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

Appendix H: Practicum Student Performance Checklist

Practicum supervisors are asked to provide feedback based on student performance according to the following criteria. A survey is sent to supervisors via an electronic link at the end of each fall and spring semester. The aim is for supervisors to reflect on and share feedback regarding the degree to which practicum students to demonstrate the following skills.

- ☐ Effectively follows the practicum site's systems/processes.
- ☐ Effectively works with staff, including supervisor.
- ☐ Demonstrates openness and responsiveness to feedback.
- ☐ Demonstrates professional ethics and boundaries.
- ☐ Effectively engages in diagnosis and assessment.
- ☐ Develops appropriate treatment plans.
- ☐ Establishes and maintains therapeutic relationships with clients/patients.
- ☐ Appropriately uses skills to conduct individual therapy.
- ☐ Appropriately uses skills to conduct group therapy.
- ☐ Demonstrates effective written communication (e.g., progress notes, treatment planning).
- ☐ Effectively communicates about case dynamics in supervision or case conferences.
- ☐ Effectively communicates about concerns that may impact the training experience.