



# Practicum Handbook

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*Master of Clinical/ Counseling Program*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The successful completion of the clinical practicum experience is required for completion of the Master of Clinical/Counseling Psychology degree. The practicum offers graduate students enrolled in the Master of Clinical/Counseling Psychology program opportunities to enhance their professional development via application and integration of classroom theory and training with supervised clinical work experiences. Practicum training will allow you to provide meaningful work related to your professional identity as a clinician in training. Importantly, the practicum experience also provides you with access to the possibilities of permanent employment upon completion of your training. The departmental clinical practicum coordinator will assist you in identifying sites for practicum placement. Concurrent with the clinical training at community sites, students also take the Practicum course which 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 which are to be supervised by a licensed Professional counselor, Clinical Social Worker, Marriage and Family Therapist, Psychologist, or Psychiatrist at the student's practicum site. Students must keep a documented log of practicum hours. 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 Practicum I include: PSYC 5170 (Advanced Psychopathology) with a minimum grade of C and PSYC 5160 (The Helping Relationship) with a minimum grade of C. The student must also have permission of the graduate program director and clinical coordinator. 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). 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 mid-December of their eligibility to apply for practicum.

B. *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). These are minimum training requirements and do not prevent students from committing to longer internship/practicum periods, pending the approval of the clinical and practicum coordinators. The curriculum is designed so that students attend class on Tuesdays and Thursdays so that they may be available 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.

D. *Practicum Site Requirements/Expectations.* 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 9-month/15-20 hours a week commitment from students, while other sites allow the student's institution to determine the length of the training period. Please note that many sites do not follow the university calendar and students are expected to work during semester breaks or other times when the student is not required to be in school. 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. Also, although CSU designates practicum as two separate experiences (Practicum I and II) to be completed in two semesters, most sites refer to the practicum as an *Internship* to be completed during one nine-month period. These designations do not affect the student as long as the student is actively completing clinical work for the duration of the second academic year. Please keep in mind that students may have minimum (12-15 hours a week) and maximum (30) clinical hours that they are allowed to complete a week so that they are able to have a meaningful training experience. All students must keep track of their practicum hours by entering them into the electronic tracking system, Time2Track. Students are responsible for submitting these hours (electronically) to their supervisors for approval. 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 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).

#### *E. 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. To remain in the practicum class, students should acquire a practicum site by the drop/add period and no later than the midpoint to avoid academic repercussions associated with withdrawal after the midpoint. 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.

*F. 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 about the site so that the site can be evaluated. Most sites have deadline dates for application and only accept practicum students/*interns* once a year. Deadlines are typically in January/February of each year and selections are made in February/March. Some sites have rolling admissions. Students should check with sites to find out their specific deadlines. Selected students will then begin practicum in August of the next academic 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.

G. *The Practicum Application 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. The practicum coordinator strongly suggests that you begin working on your curriculum vita and cover letter as soon as possible. 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. After receiving letters of interest, training directors and their staff will review their pool of applicants and invite selected students for interviews. The interview format may either be individual or group. 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**.

H. *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 clinical coordinator for the MSP Clinical Track.

## **Practicum Checklist**

### *Before Applying to Practicum (September-December)*

Did you....?

- [ ] Meet with the department's Practicum Coordinator before December of your first term for assistance in finding an approved practicum? Contact Dr. Charlie Harris @ [charlieharris@clayton.edu](mailto:charlieharris@clayton.edu) (678-466-4838).
- [ ] Complete your curriculum vita and cover letter
- [ ] Contact (via email/or phone) the training director for the practicum site and submit your letter of interest, CV, and Training Requirements
- [ ] Ensure that the site meets major training objectives as outlined in the training requirements document
- [ ] Ensure that the site can make accommodations for orientation, work schedule, and supervision that do not conflict with your academic courses
- [ ] Prepare for the practicum interviewing process (e.g. practice with faculty, review potential interview questions, etc.)

### *After Acceptance to Practicum (March-May)*

Did you....?

- [ ] Complete the practicum tracking form and submit to the practicum coordinator
- [ ] Acquire professional liability insurance before your first day of practicum and provide the practicum coordinator and site supervisor with documentation of coverage
- [ ] Sign the student agreement as part of the CSU-practicum site contract
- [ ] Complete a practicum training contract outlining your start and end dates and responsibilities (oftentimes, this is part of the institutions Memorandum of Understanding(MOU) with the site) and provide the practicum coordinator with a copy of the contract

### *After Starting Practicum (August-May)*

Did you....

- [ ] Ensure that you will be able to work a minimum of 20 hours a week across 2-3 days?
- [ ] Review the CSU training requirements and discuss how they will be met with your supervisor?
- [ ] Complete the requisite practicum course form that identifies your direct supervisor and his/her contact information
- [ ] 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).
- [ ] Keep a detailed log of practicum training hours that specifies time spent in direct patient care activities, administrative activities, and supervision (type/format). Supervision log should be signed by the appropriate licensed supervisor.
- [ ] Complete any requirements associated with the practicum course

## **Practicum Coordinator and Practicum Instructor Roles and Responsibilities**

The practicum coordinator and practicum instructor play instrumental roles in the oversight and management of the supervised clinical training experience required for completion of the Master of Psychology degree. Although there is some overlap in duties/responsibilities, the primary functions for each are outlined below. In general, the practicum coordinator serves an administrative role and provides students with information about the practicum application process and requirements. Students will typically communicate with the coordinator as they identify, apply, and prepare for placements. During the year students initiate their practicum, students will engage with the practicum instructor of record who monitors students' progress and addresses any specific concerns as they relate to student performance.

### Practicum Coordinator

- 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
- Ensuring that students meet prerequisite program requirements before starting practicum
- Develops and maintains database of potential practicum sites that is shared with students
- Screens, selects, and approve practicum sites that meet program educational requirements
- Develop MOUs with practicum sites and maintains ongoing relationships with sites
- Oversee student evaluation process at the practicum sites
- Ensure students understand site requirements for liability insurance, background checks, etc. before beginning practicum.
- Maintains records of student learning agreements with internship sites
- Teaches practicum course
- Monitors student progress at their respective sites via evaluations from supervisors
- Communicate with practicum sites regarding professional and clinical issues pertaining to students rotating at the sites
- Provides feedback to students pertaining to professional issues related to their performance on practicum
- Collects and maintains database of students clinical logs
- Keeps students abreast of their progress toward completing the direct/indirect clinical hours requirements
- Based upon performance in practicum course and at practicum site, assigns grade for clinical practicum

### Practicum Instructor

## **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 per week. **Students attend class on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:50 a.m.-3:30 p.m.** and are unavailable to fulfill practicum requirements during these days/times. 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. If you have questions or concerns related to our training requirements, please contact our practicum coordinator, Dr. Charlie Harris @ [charlieharris@clayton.edu](mailto:charlieharris@clayton.edu) or by phone at 678-466-4838.

**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? How would you handle such a situation if it arises? (Suicide assessment/dangerousness to self/others)
15. What do you consider your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
16. How do you think a friend or previous employer would describe you?

## **APPENDIX D: SAMPLE PRACTICUM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (Cont'd)**

17. If I talk to your peers, what would they say about you that are different from what you think about yourself?
18. What do you look for in supervision?
19. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and a supervisee?
20. What are important elements of teamwork?
21. 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?
22. How will you establish boundaries in your work as a counselor? They may give hypothetical situation and ask how you would address it.
23. 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.
24. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
25. What are your experiences/training with assessment tools (or diagnostic interviews/psychosocial interviews, etc.)?
26. What will your schedule be? Can you work evening hours?
27. Do you have any questions? (Always have at least one question ready that is specific to the site.)