

PRACTICUM GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

A practicum consists of a team of four to six students—occasionally fewer—that works with a faculty supervisor to produce deliverables for a client organization. The team develops and implements a detailed work plan, collects relevant data and information, and writes a report or produces some other product (e.g. brochure, manual, film, media campaign). Additionally, the team is to unpack and grapple with political issues and methodological challenges associated with the project.

As consultants working as a team for a client, students are expected to:

- Decide on appropriate methods to collect relevant data and information.
- Prepare and deliver a professional product (report, brochure, manual).
- Increase and apply knowledge surrounding the specific project topic, problem and sector.
- Practice teamwork skills, including managing roles and responsibilities among members to produce optimal results.
- Prepare, rehearse and give a presentation to the client and GPIA.
- Develop professional consulting skills, including understanding client objectives, using a Terms of Reference, managing appropriate client communication and reporting, turning in high-quality work on deadline, gaining understanding of how organizations work, and expanding professional networks.

Practicum Products

Common project work includes research and policy analysis, program design or re-design, and monitoring and evaluation set-up through logical framework and indicators work. The projects are not merely an academic exercise; the project work and final product is to be intelligible to and used by the client organization. Practicum products can take many forms—they are specific to the needs of the client. Some example of deliverables includes:

- Toolkit for field staff training.
- Comparative analysis case studies.
- Surveys.
- An organizational needs assessment.
- Policy and analysis papers.
- A feasibility study.
- Grant proposal.
- Website.
- Advocacy film.

Applying for Practicums

Students interested in the practicum apply for this option in the semester before their final year of study—two weeks before registration for their third semester and be prepared to be interviewed. The application will consist of a CV and a brief denoting skills, previous relevant classes, and areas of interests, as well as outline what the two-class series will be that satisfy the practicum (and capstone) requirements—the first of the proposed classes is to develop knowledge and skills necessary to carry out the project, the second is to complete the project. After students apply, they will be interviewed to gather additional information and better assess their fit. Qualified candidates will then submit a Capstone Declaration form and register.

The application process (vetting students) and administration of practicums (including vetting and organizing practicums, overseeing supervisors, and addressing logistical and student issues) will be managed by a Practicum Directorate. This will consist of two faculty and the Associate Director for Practice-Based Learning (currently Peter Hoffman, Mark Johnson and Fabiola Berdiel).

The Practicum Directorate will endeavor to match qualified candidates with practicums that will run the following academic year. It is not expected that every student placed in a practicum will possess every requisite skill to complete the project but in assembling teams the Practicum Directorate will ensure that all the skills deemed necessary by the partner organization are on hand within the group.

Professional Conduct

Practicums are professional exercises and students must at all time be respectful of the professional environment. While it is the presumption that students who have been vetted and accepted into the practicum will behave professionally, the Practicum Directorate will investigate situations as required and will take any necessary measures to guarantee a safe and productive work environment. Students who are found to have been disrespectful of clients, supervisors, or colleagues, or disruptive of the learning process will be removed from the practicum team.

