

**INDUSTRIAL & ORGANIZATIONAL
PSYCHOLOGY**

Practicum Handbook

**Florida Institute of Technology
School of Psychology
Revised January, 2005**

INTRODUCTION

The integration of course work and practice is an integral part of your training as an applied psychologist. To achieve this, students in the I/O program complete an extensive practicum to prepare for professional careers in I/O psychology. Practica allow students to develop hands-on skills and gain real-world experience in applied research and problem solving. The purpose of this handbook is to give you an overview of the practicum requirements, procedures, and opportunities available to you.

OVERVIEW OF PRACTICUM PROGRAM

Practicum placements may be made in local, national, and international organizations or with consultants in which the student engages in supervised activities related to one or more areas of I/O Psychology. Students are encouraged to start their practica in their second or third semester in the program, or between the two during the summer. After a suitable practicum site and supervisor have been identified, an agreement is prepared that outlines the activities that will comprise the practicum. In addition to the Practicum Agreement, all students registered for a practicum are responsible for handing in a final technical report at the completion of their practicum.

Typical practicum projects have included the improvement and redesign of job descriptions, development and analysis of employee satisfaction surveys, design and implementation of a new performance appraisal system, development of training and team building programs, and a systematic assessment of training needs. Practica may be completed at a place where the student is already employed, but there must be evidence that the project completed represents work beyond the normal job requirements.

Each site will require different types of skills and knowledge from the intern. An overarching theme in the practicum experience is the expectation that students will be able to demonstrate initiative and work with minimal supervision. While managers typically expect students to demonstrate initiative and work with minimal supervision, you should ask questions and clarify goals when necessary. While the majority of organizations provide performance feedback, it is not a guarantee; you may need to ask for it. If you do receive performance feedback, it is likely to be provided informally in coaching or mentoring sessions.

A SIOP survey of practicum supervisors found that supervisors are looking for students to demonstrate several competencies. While technical skills (particularly statistical knowledge) are considered important, respondents emphasized interpersonal skills, work ethic (e.g., conscientiousness, results orientation), and ability to demonstrate initiative and be proactive. Communication skills are also critical, especially the ability to translate complex statistical or

methodological information into business or lay-terminology. Additionally, respondents mentioned quality orientation, adaptability, continuous learning (e.g., recognizes weaknesses, seeks information, quick learner, accepts feedback), and problem solving as being key characteristics of effective interns. Finally, respondents indicated that effective interns understand the constraints placed on I/O research techniques in business environments and are willing and able to make appropriate trade-offs between scientific rigor and business realities.

LOGISTICS

Students should prepare their resume and cover letter early in their second semester and contact the Director of the Center for Professional Service for local contact information from which to start their search. Some of the local organizations that past students have had practicum experiences at include Harris, Intersil, DEOMI, Brevard County, and Dictaphone.

Students completing a practicum will register for six hours of practicum credit (PSY 5496) and participate in at least 300 hours of actual work time. Students will also prepare a final technical report regarding the work they performed and take the Master's Specialty Exam during their final semester.

Many practicum projects will overlap semesters and/or interims between semesters. This is acceptable. You may also complete your practicum hours by participating in a practicum in more than one location or on more than one project. If you do not complete your practicum in the semester you are enrolled for the hours, you will not be assigned a final grade until the work is completed. You have one year to finish the work and change the grade before it reverts to a failed grade and potential for dismissal from the program.

Projects are designed after consultation between the on-site supervisor, the supervising faculty member, and the graduate student. It is recognized that the practicum may involve other work-related activities besides the "official" project. The project should serve as an activity that can be clearly linked to the research base of I/O psychology, and ideally will involve the collection and analysis of data. Students will be expected to do background reading and preparation for the project based on literature from I/O psychology. Students will prepare a written statement of the tasks to be accomplished and what they will learn from the experience. This information will be included in the final Practicum Agreement. An electronic version of the practicum agreement can be obtained from your faculty advisor (see the sample Practicum Agreement on page 10).

The proposed project will be evaluated based on the extent that it is: (a) related to an area of I/O psychology, (b) of potential service to the organization, and (c) of learning benefit to the student. Upon completion of the project, a technical report will be completed that details the methodology used, the results obtained, and conclusions. This report should be turned in to the student's faculty advisor upon completion of the practicum.

Some students elect to complete a practicum and a thesis although only one is required to achieve the I/O Masters degree. Students must obtain approval from their faculty advisor before pursuing both options.

<i>If you are NOT planning on completing a Thesis</i>	<i>If you are planning on completing a Thesis <u>and</u> Practicum</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register for 6 practicum credit hrs (PSY 5496) • Participate in 300 hrs of actual work time • Take Master's specialty exam in fourth semester 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register for 3 practicum credit hrs (PSY 5496) • Participate in 150 hrs of actual work time • Complete Thesis

MASTER'S SPECIALTY EXAM

The purpose of the master's specialty exam is to assess the master's level graduate student's competence related to practical activities that could be experienced in a professional setting. The exam consists of 4 to 5 questions presented in the form of a memo to a new HR practitioner. To successfully answer the questions, the test taker must employ and demonstrate mastery of the following skills: targeted research, data manipulation, data analysis, and interpretation of results. The solutions to the questions must be presented in the form of a report that summarizes and details the processes conducted in the analysis and recommendations based on the findings.

The Master's Specialty Exam is taken over a weekend near the end of the final semester. Dates will be agreed upon by all students participating in the exam and the Exam Committee in January of the student's final semester. The student will receive the exam from the chair of the Master's Exam Committee on Friday afternoon. Students may ask questions at that point but once they accept the exam they are on their own. The student will be required to return the exam questions and final report by 5:00 p.m. the following Monday. The test taker may use any available library resources; however, the test taker will not be allowed to solicit help from other individuals. The test is graded on a pass/fail basis. If the test taker does not pass, he/she will be allowed to retake the exam once.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students will be evaluated and graded based upon how well they fulfill the following requirements:

1. Define areas of interest for the practicum course work within the first year of study. Prepare a resume.
2. Locate an appropriate organization for completion of practicum requirements. This may be an organization referred by a faculty member, however, it is up to the student to make contact with the organization, interview, and market themselves in such a way that facilitates placement. For students who are already working for a proposed practicum organization, the scope of the project and logged hours must demonstrate that the practicum entails more than normal job duties and responsibilities.
3. Register for practicum hours (PSY 5496) through regular Florida Tech School of Psychology procedures.
4. Prepare a written agreement documenting expectations for the practicum experience and get faculty and on-site supervisor approval of its specific behavioral and outcome-oriented objectives. This agreement needs to be completed within the first two weeks of the practicum or prior to logging more than 40 hours toward completion. A student will not be given credit for more than 40 hours toward practicum completion unless an approved agreement is in place.

The agreement between the student and the organization must specify the following:

- a. The learning objectives of the practicum for the student and the proposed benefit to the organization.
- b. The number of credit hours and actual work hours that are to be fulfilled by the placement.
- c. The processes and products that will be involved in the practicum. The process component should include the activities that will be performed, who the student will work with, and how the work will be accomplished (e.g., library research, interviews, etc.). This portion should resemble a brief job analysis of what will be done with specific task statements. Products include written or other physical documentation or deliverables, such as surveys or manuals that are produced as a result of the practicum.
- d. Payment terms, if applicable.

- e. The names and signatures of the student and the on-site supervisor (and full contact information) indicating consent to the agreement. Be sure the agreement is dated and signed.
5. Maintain a log of hours and experiences documenting the practicum participation, including specific times, dates, and activities. See the sample time sheet on page 11. Some practicum sites require students to log their hours worked; if so, this will be sufficient to meet the time tracking requirement.
6. Demonstrate professional behavior and maintain professional ethics in all work performed on site. APA has published ethical standards to which all students should refer. In addition, there are ethical guidelines that have been developed for I/O service providers under the sponsorship of Division 14 of APA, The Society for I/O Psychology (SIOP).
7. Maintain the confidentiality of the organization and respect the business practices that make the organization unique within its industry.
8. Complete a journal throughout the entire practicum. Students should keep their faculty supervisor informed of problems or new developments encountered during the practicum. If unforeseen circumstances arise, the student is responsible for re-negotiating the agreement as necessary. The journal should:
 - a. Document progress on the project and summarize what has been completed toward fulfilling the negotiated agreement
 - b. Include reflections and thoughts on the project work, organizational realities encountered and learning points.
9. Complete a technical report due to the faculty advisor after the completion of the practicum. It is the student's responsibility to let their faculty advisor know when the practicum has been completed and agree on a deadline for the technical report. The technical report should include:
 - a. Discuss the project or work completed in detail. What was the project? What did you do? What was your role?
 - b. Literature review of areas associated with project work.
 - c. Identification of any obstacles encountered and measures taken to overcome the obstacles.

- d. Work samples and documents produced for the project, such as a survey or job analysis.
 - e. Completed journal.
 - f. Completed timesheet.
 - g. Practicum Agreement.
10. Provide feedback on whether or not the practicum site should be considered for future placements.

FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Maintain a current file of previous/active practicum sites for use by students in identifying practicum possibilities.
2. Assist students in the definition and identification of practicum projects such that the scope and standards are consistent with other projects completed in the I/O program.
3. Review and approve practicum projects. Provide feedback that facilitates the revision of the agreement.
4. Assist student and on-site supervisor with problems and technical expertise as required by the nature of the agreement and the practicum. This may include reviewing drafts of documents (such as surveys or handbooks) or assisting with data analysis.
5. Coordinate with front office IO secretary to maintain individual student practicum files by placing reviewed and approved agreements, behavioral observations, final reports, on-site supervisor correspondence, and other documentation in student files.
6. Maintain the confidentiality of the organization and respect the business practices that make the organization unique within its industry.
7. Review final practicum documentation and technical report for quality and consistency with the initial/renewed agreement.
8. Provide specific and constructive feedback to the student.

9. Assign a final practicum grade based upon the student's fulfillment of the responsibilities outlined above.

ON-SITE COORDINATOR/SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Inform I/O program coordinator of the organization's interest in practicum students. This should also include any special skills or requirements involved, time commitment and proposed compensation to the student, if any.
2. Interview potential practicum students and provide feedback to the department about the acceptance or rejection based upon fit with the organization's needs and expectations. Care should be taken to assure that the acceptance or rejection of students is done on the basis of job-related criteria so that the School of Psychology can provide constructive feedback to students. Florida Tech is committed to equal opportunity for all students; placements should be made without regard to race, sex, religion, national origin, age, handicap, or veteran status in compliance with applicable educational and employment law.
3. Negotiate a specific behavioral agreement with the student for the conduct and conclusion of practicum activities. As far as is possible, the agreement should specify the time schedule for work as well as the due dates for practicum projects and completion and payment terms. Standards of performance and desired outcomes should be included.
4. Supervise the practicum in a manner similar to supervision given employees of the organization. This should include being available for consultation and decisions required for the completion of the agreement, review and feedback of the student's projects, products, and behavior.
5. Contact the faculty advisor for assistance with any problems or unforeseen circumstances that need attention.
6. Allow students access to the information, products, and people needed to successfully complete practicum assignments.
8. Evaluate students on the performance and products involved in the completion of the practicum in accordance with the original agreement. The on-site coordinator/supervisor will be contacted upon completion of the practicum to provide feedback and a performance evaluation of the student.



Sample Practicum Agreement
STUENDT NAME
DATE

STUDENT NAME will work toward meeting her practicum requirements under the supervision of PRACTICUM SUPERVISOR working on the PROJECT NAME/CLIENT ORGANIZATION

NOTE: THESE ARE SAMPLES

- Expected hours: approx. 15-20 hours per week, October 2002 though January 2003.
- Pay Rate: \$10/hour, weekly time sheets to be submitted to Project Manager
- Course Credit: PSY 5496 – 6 credits
- Primary Supervisor:
 - Phone:
 - Email:

Major Tasks & Responsibilities (SAMPLE)

- o Developing task statements and preparing a script for telephone interviews
- o Constructing a needs assessment survey
- o Completing a literature review on the elements of good curriculum design
- o Designing a performance appraisal tool
- o Analyzing data received from the performance appraisal
- o Devising detailed curriculum recommendations based on the data collected.

Practical Learning Objectives (SAMPLE)

- o Developing job analysis and interviewing skills
- o Learning how to conduct a needs assessment
- o Understanding how to complete curriculum design
- o Applying data collection and analysis skills gained from courses taken.

End of Project Technical Report Due to Dr. Steelman no later than 2 weeks after completion of project/final deliverables. Student must notify Dr. Steelman when hours are completed.

By signing this form, the student agrees to complete the assigned work to the best of his or her ability at all times. The student agrees to professionally represent Florida Tech and demonstrate professional behavior and maintain professional ethics in all work performed. Further, the student acknowledges that this is not a contract of employment and should the student or employer fail to meet the requirements and expectations of the practicum agreement, the relationship may be terminated.

Student Date

Practicum Supervisor Date

Sample Time Sheet

WEEK	Date	Hours	Tasks Completed
Week 1	May 9	8	Wrote Job Description
Week 1	May 13	8	Reviewed job descriptions with supervisor, made revisions
Week 3			
Week 4			
Week 5			
Week 6			
Week 7			
Week 8			
Week 9			
Week 10			
Week 11			
Week 12			
Week 13			
Week 14			
Week 15			

Sample Evaluation of Intern

Date: 01/01/04

Supervisor: Jane Doe

Intern: John Smith

Location: Company X

Instructions: Please rate your intern on his or her performance during the practicum experience with you. Please use the following scale to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. Thank you for your time.

① Strongly Disagree	② Disagree	③ Neither Disagree Nor Agree	④ Agree	⑤ Strongly Agree
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The Intern:

1. Worked well with others	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
2. Had basic statistical skills	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
3. Demonstrated effective written communication	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
4. Demonstrated effective verbal communication	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
5. Demonstrated good organizational skills	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
6. Was reliable (on time to meetings, worked when he or she had committed to working)	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
7. Was open to learning and continuous improvement	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
8. Demonstrated flexibility and a customer orientation	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
9. Had a quality focus, a commitment to producing high quality work	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
10. Was always professional in his or her dealings with others and the organization	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
11. Is someone I would be willing to work with again	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

Additional Comments:

Sample Evaluation of Practicum Experience

Date: 01/01/04

Supervisor: Jane Doe

Intern: John Smith

Location: Company X

Instructions: Please provide information on your practicum experience by rating the following statements. Please use the following scale to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. Thank you for your time.

① Strongly Disagree	② Disagree	③ Neither Disagree Nor Agree	④ Agree	⑤ Strongly Agree
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1. My practicum experience as a whole was extremely beneficial.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
2. I would recommend my practicum site to other students.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
3. I feel my supervisor utilized me to my fullest potential.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
4. My supervisor gave me helpful feedback.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
5. I was worked on a challenging project.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
6. I was able to apply what I learn in class to my practicum.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
7. My supervisor provided assistance as necessary to help me with the projects I was assigned.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
8. My practicum experience helped improve my overall skills as an I/O psychologist.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
9. My practicum provided me with useful information.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
10. If given the chance to go back and choose a different practicum, I would still choose the same one.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

Additional Comments: