FIELD EDUCATION FAQ’s

WHAT IS FIELD EDUCATION/PRACTICUM?

The LSU School of Social Work folds field practicum into the educational thrust of the MSW program, maintaining its centrality to the School mission and its relevance to course work. An integral part of social work education, field education is an experience, which not only employs community agencies and programs as learning laboratories for students but represents the central form of instruction and learning. The intent of field education is to connect the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practice setting (CSWE-EPAS, 2009).

Field placements expose students to the broad field of social work, as well as to a wide range of experiences. The internship experience is directly related to classroom learning and serves to synthesize theory and practice. Through this experience, students gather more information about their commitment to social work values and ethics and their professional identity. Becoming a professional social worker demands that a student embark on an exploration of challenging theories, complex analyses of policies and programs and self-examination as he or she uses new information to deal with the complex problems presented in professional social work field education.

WHEN DO I COMPLETE MY FIELD EDUCATION/PRACTICUM?

Full-time students normally complete their internships concurrently with other course work. Part-time students typically complete four semesters, or 24 hours of foundation courses in the fall and spring semesters followed by a summer block internship (480 hours during 12 weeks of the summer term) in the second year. In the part-time student's third and fourth year students complete the last 24 hours of advanced courses in the fall and spring semesters followed by a spring and summer placement or a summer double block internship (480 hours during 12 weeks of the summer term).

Students complete internship hours during the traditional workday, as defined as the normal hours services are provided to clients and supervision available; evening, night and weekend hours are the exception. No internship can be completed entirely during evening or weekend hours because it is essential that students participate in staff meetings and other normal agency activities that occur during the day. Students must complete a minimum of 18-20 hours per week in their assigned placements. Due to semester dates and holidays this minimum may be increased.

HOW ARE FIELD EDUCATION PLACEMENTS ARRANGED?

The Field Office staff will identify potential field placements based on a students’ personal interview with the field office staff and written field application submitted by students, which includes interest areas, past experiences, geography, etc. Although the School will try to honor student's needs and preferences, the School is unable to guarantee specific arrangements to accommodate all student preferences. Students are matched with agencies based upon the agencies' abilities to offer experiences, which are different from the students' previous experiences, and on their potential to expose students to diverse populations, social issues, and a broad spectrum of social work services. Students not submitting a field application and resume prior to the deadline date (listed on student calendar) may forfeit placement and have to defer one semester.

The major objective in the placement process is the matching of student educational needs with a field education placement, which offers opportunities judged to have the best potential for promoting the student’s professional development. The School will consider personal factors related to the location of placements, but the primary concern is the placement of the student in a setting judged to have the best potential for promoting the student’s professional development.

Responsibility for making field placement assignments rests with the Assistant Dean and Assistant Director of Field Education. **STUDENTS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO APPROACH AGENCIES DIRECTLY TO ARRANGE THEIR OWN PLACEMENT.**
**Placement Interview**

Once a potential agency is identified, the student is notified by the Field Office to schedule a professional field placement interview with the agency to determine his or her acceptability for placement. Student failure to contact the agency within 10 days of notification may result in deferring placement for one semester. Students not accepted by the assigned agency due to non-agency issues will have to meet with the field office staff to re-evaluate placement status, and will be required to defer their internship for at least one semester and it is considered an **unsuccessful** placement.

**How Many Courses and Hours Are Required?**

Students’ complete twelve semester hours of field education courses, working a total of 960 clock hours of training in the field (a minimum of 900 hours must be agency clock hours). The field education program at LSU is divided into two equally important parts:

- **Foundation Internship**
  - SW7007 Foundation I Internship
  - SW7008 Foundation II Internship

- **Advanced Internship**
  - SW7502 Advanced I Internship
  - SW7503 Advanced II Internship

**What Is the Foundation Placement?**

During their foundation year, students learn the practice perspectives and frameworks associated with generalist practice—for example, eco-systems, psycho-social, strengths-based, and problem solving approaches. The first two internship courses, known as foundation or first year, accompany the foundation classroom courses. They are designed to expose students to the entire field of social work and to the methods of direct work with clients and indirect work with larger systems. A two-semester, educationally directed experience, the foundation internship not only exposes the student to the broad field of social work while giving her/him the stability of remaining anchored in a specific agency, but also provides a structure in which to apply academic instruction to actual agency practice.

**Do I Have to Complete a Field Orientation or Training Before Beginning Field Placement?**

The first phase of foundation placement is an eighteen hour field orientation, which introduces students to social work ethics and values, model of field education, policies and procedures, safety, diversity training, and beginning skills of social work. Field staff, faculty, and community professionals present material, and facilitate exercises to guide their learning, particularly their skill development and exploration of values and ethical issues. This orientation includes a 2 day skills lab that provides a basic overview of interviewing skills and opportunity of application through role play. The Field Office may assign learning tasks to students based on written autobiographical material, which students have submitted. The orientation uses mechanisms of exposition of material, experiential activities, small group discussions, and agency site visits to institutions (such as prisons and mental hospitals) with which students are often unfamiliar. The 18 hours of orientation and skills lab count toward the 240 hours of the first foundation course SW7007. With completion of the orientation, students report to their assigned agencies. No student will be allowed to begin their first field placement without completing Field Orientation. This orientation is offered at the beginning of the Fall and Spring semesters (Refer to the student calendar for date and location).

**What Is the Advanced Placement?**

The advanced field internship (SW 7502: Advanced Field Internship I, and SW 7503: Advanced Field Internship II), is designed to:
• build upon the student's knowledge, skills and values gained in the foundation year;
• encourage the student to apply/integrate advanced direct practice theories and skills offered in the courses;
• offer more intense experiences so that students mature in their understanding of the depth of social work practice;
• provide a framework in which students can acquire specific practice skills in their areas of interest;
• further cultivate their own personal style of practice;
• grow in their ability to function autonomously; and
• further extend their knowledge of the community and skills in program planning, policy formulation, research, and evaluation.

Before students can enroll for any advanced courses, they must complete all foundation courses. Under no circumstances are students permitted to delay internship until they have completed all course work in the program; it is essential that students have the opportunity to integrate classroom learning and field experiences.

**ARE SUMMER OR BLOCK PLACEMENTS AVAILABLE?**

Students are expected to follow a sequential program of study as outlined in the School Bulletin. Foundation placement and advanced internships must be taken CONCURRENTLY with the prescribed curriculum, or FOLLOWING the prescribed curriculum. Students will not be allowed to register for a summer internship prior to completing required courses.

Part-time students generally complete field internships in the spring and/or summer semesters following completion of their course work. Therefore, a part-time student who has completed 24 hours of foundation course work must take the first foundation internship in the summer or a spring/summer combination. Students will not be allowed to take any courses in the Advanced Program until they have successfully completed **ALL** Foundation Courses, including Foundation Internship I (SW7007) and Foundation Internship II (SW7008).

As is true with concurrent placements, students complete double block placements (two field courses in the same semester) in the same agency. Typically, double block internships require a minimum of 40 hours per week for 12 weeks in the agency.

**CAN I REQUEST TO USE MY CURRENT JOB AS A FIELD PLACEMENT?**

The Field Office will generally **NOT** assign a student to a placement in a social service agency where the student is an employee. However, in certain circumstances, the request to utilize the work setting for field placement may be granted. It is recognized that due to the increasing cost of higher education and other obligations, many students must work during their schooling, and the utilization of the work setting may become an option.

The Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) standards addresses the need to maintain the educational focus of the field experience and to differentiate between job and internship activities. This option is considered on an individual basis by the Assistant Dean of Field Education to insure that students receive a variety of field experiences and supervision in the field internship. The following criteria for utilizing the work setting as a field placement have been established by the LSU's School of Social Work Office of Field Education:

1. The agency must be large enough to provide a move or a significant change to a different department, section or program that represents new and different experiences than the student's current employment.
2. This department, section, or program must be able to meet the educational needs of the student, fulfill the competencies for the internship, and allow the student to complete the required internship hours.
3. This change to a different department, section, or program within the agency must expose the student to a client population and responsibilities that are a significant change from the student's current employment.
4. The agency must provide a field instructor who is not the regular employee supervisor. If this person is not a LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker) the agency must provide a licensed social worker to provide at least one hour per week of face to face supervision. This LCSW must meet the criteria for an approved supervisor.

5. The agency must provide written documentation from an agency administrator that the student will be released from regular work duties at least 16-18 hours per week to attend to internship matters. This written documentation must also include an understanding from the agency administrators that the student's time will focus on learning, not on work performance or the work demands of the agency. The internship placement will be terminated if this understanding is not honored.

6. Agencies must meet all the criteria for an internship setting as set forth by Louisiana State University School of Social Work and go through the process to become an approved site, if the agency is not already an approved agency.

7. Students requesting their current work setting as a possible internship placement may request this option only once. A student will not be allowed to complete both field placements at a place of employment. The Assistant Dean of Field Internship will make the final decision as to which year the student will be able to utilize their place of employment as a possible internship setting.

8. Students who are in a position of authority or family member (CEO, Executive Director, etc.) CANNOT intern in their agency.

**PROCESSING THE REQUEST**

Students interested in this option must submit a completed **Work Site Placement Request Form** to the Assistant Dean of Field Education at least one semester before beginning the internship, or in the case of a new student, two weeks after completion of field interview.

- The written request must contain the following information:

**THE STUDENT**

1. Description of present and potential job responsibilities, title, and supervisor.
2. Beginning date of employment with the agency;
3. Description of proposed field internship assignments, including the department, section, and/or program change;
4. Intended internship supervisor; if this person is not a LCSW or a social worker licensed by another state, then submission of the proposed LCSW supervisor is required.
5. Written plan detailing the release time for internship work and regular work signed by the current job supervisor and the intended internship supervisor, and the LCSW if applicable.

**THE AGENCY**

1. Written approval from an agency administrator agreeing to this proposal. This should also include signatures from present supervisor, intended internship supervisor, LCSW supervisor, if applicable, and program director, department head, or section leader of the proposed internship setting.
2. Written documentation from an agency administrator that the student will be released from regular work duties at least 16 hours per week to attend to internship matters. This written documentation must also include an understanding from the agency administrators that a) the students' time will focus on learning, not on work performance or the work demands of the agency; and b) the internship will be terminated by the School of Social Work if this agreement is not honored.
The Assistant Dean and Assistant Director of Field Education will review the written request, and a decision by the Assistant Dean will be made within 30 days of the receipt of the proposal. The student, agency, and supervisors are expected to adhere to the agreement reached between the Field Office, the student, the supervisors, and the agency. If the Field Office accesses that the student is attending to regular job duties during the designated field internship time or field competencies are not being met, the Field Office will terminate the work-site agreement.

**CAN I REQUEST A NEW AGENCY THAT IS NOT LISTED ON THE CURRENT APPROVED AGENCY LIST?**

If a student, alum, faculty member or supervisor is interested in having an agency considered for an internship placement site, the following procedures should be followed:

1. Check with the Field Office or web page to verify if this agency is not currently affiliated with the LSU School of Social Work or in the process of becoming approved as a placement.

2. Submit a request in writing to the Field Office providing the contact information - agency name, address, phone number. The process may take 2 - 4 months, so submit information accordingly if a placement is desired for the following semester. **NOTE:** Field Office policy stipulates that NO student may approach an agency to set up their own field placement.

3. Once the Field Office receives the information, an Affiliation Packet will be sent to the agency to explore their interest and appropriateness.

4. When the agency returns the application and they meet the Agency Criteria, the Field Office will arrange a site visit at the agency to approve or disapprove the agency as an Internship Placement Site.

**WHO DO I CONTACT IF I WILL NEED TO REQUEST ACCOMMODATIONS IN MY FIELD PLACEMENT?**

No otherwise qualified student shall, on the basis of disability, be subjected to discrimination or excluded from participation in the School of Social Work. A student with a disability may be protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and be eligible for a reasonable accommodation that will provide an equal opportunity to meet the academic criteria related to professional behavior and scholastic performance.

Prior to the placement interview, students requesting accommodations in their field courses must register with the Office of Student Disabilities Services to ensure placement options can provide the appropriate accommodations. No accommodations will be provided without documentation from the Office of Disabilities. Please contact Office of Disabilities during the semester that you submit your application for internship to ensure that accommodations can be identified before placement occurs. The Office of Field Education will work closely with the Office of Disability Services to ensure compliance with required accommodations.

**NOTE:** Students must register each semester and for each course.

**ARE THERE ANY ADDITIONAL LAB FEES OR FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE FOR FIELD PLACEMENTS?**

The School recognizes that the education-for-practice program that we offer carries some costs above regular student expenses, and that field practice is not paid employment, so we attempt to assist students in ways that are legally and financially available to us.
FEES
In addition to regular LSU tuition, internship carries a $100 fee per internship course. This fee covers mailing expenses, travel expenses, lodging, agency required health physicals, malpractice insurance for designated students, and supervisor seminars, the Field Manual, printing and distribution of Field Office materials, and other Field Office and internship costs.

REIMBURSEMENTS
Travel: Students who must travel more than 70 miles round-trip directly to and from their internship are reimbursed for each mile above 70 at .20 per mile. Students must present mileage directions from yahoo or mapquest. Student must write a letter of justification if the mileage exceeds that outlined on the yahoo or mapquest. If two or more students commute together, the rate is .20 per mile, payable to the driver. Students are expected to drive the most direct route to placement. However, when students specifically request internships that require travel when appropriate in-town assignments are available, they are responsible for their own travel and lodging expenses.

When an agency requires students to travel in order to provide agency services or conduct agency business, the agency (NOT the School) should cover travel expenses. Currently, those students who receive the Office of Community Services IV-E stipend are reimbursed for agency related travel in their own vehicle. Under no conditions is a student eligible to receive travel reimbursement for travel to Baton Rouge for field seminars or other required events on the LSU campus.

In order to be reimbursed, students must:
1. Complete a blanket “Prior Approval for Travel” Form at the beginning of each academic year.
2. Complete the "Internship Travel Report";
3. Secure the field supervisor signature on the Student Internship Travel Report Form;
4. Fill out, sign and attach the pink LSU Travel Expense Voucher (available at the School of Social Work);
5. Submit travel form, Mapquest or Yahool travel stating mileage and voucher to the School of Social Work Accounting office by the last day of the month in which travel occurred. Failure to submit at the end month may prevent reimbursement.

OTHER REIMBURSABLE FEES
The following is a list of possible fees that a student may incur at their agency that are reimbursable (NOTE: All requests for reimbursements must be accompanied by a letter from the agency stating that the expense is necessary for the student to fulfill their internship at the agency):
1. medical screenings required by the agency, such as a physical, TB testing, etc.;
2. additional liability insurance, above and beyond the University’s policy;
3. lodging for 1 night when the student’s cost of travel reimbursement would exceed the cost of 1 nights lodging;
4. parking fees when required by agency.
5. if a student must travel regularly to make home visits or travel to agency satellites for agency business, the supervisor must declare in writing that such costs are necessary, and the Field Office must approve reimbursement prior to the expense occurring.