Administrative & Educational Policies Related to Field Practicum

Holidays
Students are entitled to observe University holidays. However, students are not entitled to participate in Spring Breaks as observed by the University. As a student’s prolonged absence from the agency may create problems in terms of continuity of care to clients. This may also decrease the number of hours required the student must complete to satisfy the course mandates. Conversely, if the agency observes Spring Break or a holiday the University does not observe the student may count those hours as clock hours earned and are not required to ‘make up’ those hours. Therefore, students and field instructors should determine as part of the Learning Plan, the student’s holiday schedule, and if necessary arrangements for the student to ‘make up’ any lost hours.

Observance of Religious Holy Days by Students
A student who wishes to observe a religious holy day shall notify in writing, the field instructor, faculty liaison and field coordinator/director at the beginning of the semester during the first week of practicum. The student will be held responsible for any material covered during the excused absence, but shall be permitted reasonable time to make up any work missed. However, failure to complete the missed work within the timeframe requested will adversely impact the students’ grade. The student will not be penalized for clock hours observed during the religious holy day. Any student who feels that he or she has been unreasonably denied educational benefits because of his or her religious belief or practice may seek redress by notifying in writing the nature of his or her grievance to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs or Vice President of Student Affairs who will investigate and document each occurrence (grievance) and ensure that appropriate corrective action is taken to assure compliance with this policy. If the matter is not resolved satisfactorily the student may file a complaint pursuant to Rule 6C3-10.103, Florida Administrative Code, with the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs.

Field Practicum Hours
All fall and spring semesters BSW students must complete 480 clock hours of field work. During the summer semester, BSW students must complete 416 clock hours of field work. These requirements are based on week differentials between the summer and fall/spring semesters established by the University. The hours can be completed in the form of a block placement or part-time placement. Once the placement period begins, a student cannot switch their placement from block to part-time or part-time to block, as it can become disruptive to the practicum agency and adversely impact the continuity of services to clients. Block placements consist of a
32-hour workweek over a period of one semester. Part-time placements consist of a 16-hour work week over two consecutive semesters.

In the case of part-time placement, students that begin their practicum during the summer semester and completes the sequence in the fall must accrue 416 clock hours. Students that start their practicum in the fall or spring and complete the sequence in the following spring or summer semesters must accrue 480 clock hours.

MSW full-time students have a delayed entry into field practice and take their first field practicum concurrently with their second semester of course work in generalist practice. Foundation students complete sixteen (16) hours per week for a minimum of 450 field placement hours over fall and spring semesters and are expected to work through the end of each semester.

The concentration practicum is (16) clock hours per week for a minimum of 450 hours over fall and spring semesters. Students’ generally schedule field placement hours Monday through Thursday, and/or Fridays, unless otherwise arranged with the approval of the field instructor and faculty liaison; students and are expected to work through the end of each semester.

If a BSW/MSW student fails to complete the required practicum hours due to factors beyond their control (i.e. a death in the family, illness, etc.) they will be issued a grade of Incomplete (I) and allowed to complete their hours and outstanding assignments the following semester. Once the hours and assignments are completed, a final letter grade will be issued. However, if a student fails to complete the required hours the next semester, the incomplete grade will convert into a failing grade of (F). Conversely, if a student fails to complete the required hours due to factors within their control (i.e. not reporting to the agency, leaving early without notifying the field instructor or task supervisor, taking days off when they should be working, etc.) they will be issued a failing grade for the Field Experience in Social Work and Integrative Field Seminar courses. No student can receive consecutive ‘I’ grades for the same course(s) as it is a violation of University policy.

In some instances a student may complete the required number of field practicum hours early thereby wanting to end the practicum before the semester ends. This would be in direct violation of the agreement established on the Field Confirmation Form which specifies the beginning and ending dates of the practicum period and the regulations of the University which establishes the cycle of time that determines the semester period. Under rare circumstances, the agency may request that a student begin the field practicum early (i.e. to attend a training session that is necessary to the practicum experience). When this occurs the agency must submit to the field coordinator a written request explaining the need for this action. The coordinator/director
will review this matter and make a determination as to comply or not with this request, as the Department cannot mandate a student to start a practicum before the actual semester begins. However, if a decision is made to allow a student to begin the practicum early and the student is willing and able to do so, then the agency must immediately start counting those hours toward the student’s field practicum experience.

**Advance Standing Student**

Each student requesting advance standing student will be required to submit documentation of their BSW field placement hours per been accepted in the Advance Standing Program. Therefore, any hours remaining to complete the required 900 field hours for the master program will be completed within the master advance year field placements.

**Taking an Extra Course**

In keeping with the curriculum, students should complete all coursework prior to entering the field practicum; however, circumstances may arise when a student has only one (1) class to take when they apply for the practicum. If this should occur and the student desires a block placement, the student must take the outstanding course during a time which does not conflict with the practicum hours. To do otherwise would be disruptive to the agency and adversely impact the continuity of services to clients. It may also contribute to a reduction in the number of hours one must accumulate to meet the field experience requirements. Therefore, an outstanding course must be taken on evenings or weekends.

**Class Attendance**

Attendance in the Integrative Field Seminar course is important to the professional development of the student. It is also mandatory. Since the class meets only one (1) day a week, it is essential that students report to class. Failure to attend and participate in the class will have an adverse impact on the student’s grade. Participation is defined as actively and appropriately engaging in classroom discussion, submitting scholarly assignments to the professor when assigned and attending class regularly and on time. Poor performance in the Integrative Field Seminar class will automatically be assessed toward the Field Experience. A failing grade in Field Seminar will result in a failing grade in Field Experience and visa-versa, no exceptions. Part-time students that enroll for field over two (2) semesters must attend the Integrative Field Seminar their first (1st) semester only, while in practicum. During the second semester, the part-time student will complete their remaining practicum hours. The midterm evaluation will be submitted at the conclusion of the first semester. The final grade evaluation and completed record of field hours will be submitted at the conclusion of the second semester.
**Sick Leave**
In cases of necessitating absence from the practicum setting students shall notify the field instructor and task supervisor when applicable and take responsibility for canceling or rescheduling appointments, meetings or other responsibilities. Hours must be made up at a time agreed upon between the field instructor and the student. It is not the responsibility of the agency to accommodate the student’s schedule. All sick days must be documented on the time sheet and submitted to the field coordinator/director when the records of field hours are due in the Integrative Field Seminar class. The record must be signed and dated by the field instructor before it is submitted to the field coordinator/director. If the student has a documented medical excuse a copy of that document should be attached to the time sheet. It is important that the student understand it is ultimately their responsibility to monitor their own hours and take responsibility for making up any lost time that might jeopardize their ability to complete the total number of hours mandated by the program.

**Administrative Leave**
Professional development is an important component of every student’s training. On occasion, an opportunity may arise wherein a student may have the opportunity to attend a conference, meeting or workshop away from the agency that may conflict with attending the Integrative Field Seminar class. When this occurs the student must verbally notify the Field Coordinator/Director and present documented proof of their attendance at the event. Documented proof may be in the form of a letter, fax or E-mail from the Field Instructor, stating the name, date(s) and time(s) of the event(s). The letter or fax must be on official letterhead from the agency. The student should attach a copy of the agenda or flyer to their time sheet when submitting to the Field Coordinator/Director. If the Field Instructor feels it is important for the student to participate in this administrative opportunity as a part of the student’s professional development it should be counted toward the field practicum hours.

**Travel**
It is the student’s responsibility to secure transportation to and from the field setting. It is also their responsibility to provide their own automobile liability insurance coverage for agency-related travel if such coverage is not provided by the agency. The University has no such funds with which to reimburse students for the use of the vehicles or for other expenses incurred while conducting agency business. Reimbursement or agency-related expenses including travel should be the responsibility of the agency and should be congruent with the agency’s reimbursement policies and rates for regular staff. Travel expense for mileage reimbursement is 44.5 cents per mile (HB6001), as established by Florida law and reimbursement rates for meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) are $6, $11 and $19, respectively.
Special Students Services under the Americans with Disabilities Guidelines

Florida A&M University adheres to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For students who provide documentation of special student status under the ADA steps will be taken to ensure that the reasonable accommodations are made within the agency setting. Students must contact the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs (OEO) at (850) 599-3076/3219 to become registered as a student with special needs under the ADA. Students may also contact the Learning Development and Evaluation Center (LDEC) at (850) 599-3180. The OEO will become responsible for ensuring that persons requesting accommodations are provided with the appropriate documentation and services. If a student has a disability that impairs their ability to perform a task related to the field, even after proper accommodations are made the program reserves the right to refer them to another field of social work or different discipline.

Confidentiality

The student must sign a Release of Information form in the event that confidential information needs to be shared with field agency personnel. The information shared must be related to the educational enhancement of the student. Likewise, in accordance with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics it is important to protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of professional services and in the Integrative Field Seminar class, except for compelling professional or academic reasons. It is important to not intentionally or unintentionally use or disclose any personally identifiable information a student shares in the seminar with those outside the class.

Professional Liability Insurance

All students are required to have professional liability insurance prior to enrolling in field practicum courses. The insurance must cover the student while they are in the field. The University requires its students to carry and maintain student professional social work liability insurance in amounts no less than $1,000,000.00 per occurrence and $1,000,000.00 in the aggregate.

Criminal Record Background Screening

In accordance with Florida Statute 943.0542, it will be necessary for all students to have a Volunteer & Employee Criminal History System (VECHS) screening on file with the program, prior to approval for field practicum. Florida law restricts access to children, the elderly and disabled clients by persons convicted of specific misdemeanors and felonies (Chapter 435 Florida Statutes). These restrictions are imposed by law on social service agencies and health care facilities, which in turn requires students to comply with the same restrictions, as do their volunteers and employees. The criminal background check is performed by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Based on Florida law, the Department cannot guarantee a practicum site for
a student with a criminal history. Furthermore, it is important to note that expunged and sealed records may also be accessed by social service agencies as they conduct their own criminal record check.

**Life Experience**
The Department of Social Work does not grant social work course credit for life experience or previous work experience. A student cannot use past or current volunteer work life events or employment in lieu of the field practicum experience.

**Health Risk Warning Liability**
The student is responsible to inform the Field Coordinator/Director or Program Directors and the field instructor of any personal health care issues that could jeopardize the safety of clients/consumers or field practicum personnel. These health risks include any contagious disease or infection that is transmittable and hence would constitute a threat to the health or safety of others. Protection under federal regulations does not cover such individuals. Section 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, protects asymptomatic and asymptomatic AIDS-infected individuals against discrimination on the basis of any actual, past, or perceived effect of AIDS infection that substantially limits any major life activity. Appropriate accommodations must be made for the student in the field practicum agency.

**Harassment and Non-Discrimination**
It is the policy of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University to assure that each member of the University Community be permitted to work or attend classes in an environment free from any form of discrimination including race, religion, color, age, handicap, disability, sex, marital status, national origin, veteran status, and sexual harassment, as prohibited by state and federal statutes. Activities which alters the conditions of the work place making it an unwelcome setting are prohibited include, but not limited to sexual advances/pressure for dates, slurs, comments, jokes, innuendos, threats, inappropriate touching, beatings, inappropriate gestures, pictures, and graffiti and slang expressions.

It is the policy of the Department of Social Work at Florida A&M University to maintain an environment in which the dignity and worth of all students is respected and sexual harassment of students in their field placements is intolerable and unacceptable. Due to the unavoidable subordinate position students experience in field practicum settings, appropriate guidelines must be established for the student in the field practicum agency. These guidelines should, in part, pertain to complaints regarding sexual harassment of students because of the unavoidable subordinate position they experience in field placement settings. Sexual harassment of practicum students can be destructive to the learning environment, demoralizing to the student
and adversely affect his/her performance in the agency. It may include harassment from a field instructor, a task supervisor, or any employee of the agency, regardless of gender.

Sexual harassment of a student from FAMU can be interpreted by behaviors or comments that overtly or covertly are understood to be of a sexual nature. This may be demonstrated when; a) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s continued placement; b) submission to are rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for decisions or assessments affecting the individual’s welfare as a student placed in an agency; c) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with an individual’s welfare, academic or professional performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, offensive, and demeaning work or educational environment.

Examples of prohibited behavior may be demonstrated when; a) threats or intimidation of sexual contact which is not freely or mutually agreeable to both parties; b) continual or repeated verbal abuses of a sexual nature including graphic commentaries about a person’s body; sexual degrading words to describe the person, or propositions of a sexual nature; c) threats or insinuations that the person’s employment, grades, wages, promotional opportunities, classroom or work assignments or other conditions of continued placement may be adversely affected by not submitting to sexual advances.

Consensual sexual relationships between Field Instructor and student or between student and an agency employee are generally deemed unwise. Such relationships, although they may be appropriate in other settings are inappropriate when they occur between members of the teaching staff and students. A professional power differential exists in these situations in terms of the influence and authority which one can exercise over the other. The NASW Code of Ethics, section 3.02-(d), states social workers who function as educators for students should not engage in any relationship with students in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the student. (Dual or multiple relationships is when educators relate to students in more than one relationship, whether professional, social, or business. Dual or multiple relationships can occur simultaneously or consecutively). If a charge of sexual harassment is lodged regarding a once-consenting relationship, the burden may be on the alleged offender to prove that the sexual harassment policy was not violated.

Sexual harassment of any practicum student from the Department of Social Work Program shall not be tolerated from any Field Instructor, Faculty Liaison, and Task Supervisor, employee or representative of the field practicum agency. To ensure that students are placed in an agency environment free from sexual harassment, the following will occur:
The resolution of the investigation may include, but is not limited to the following:

A). The complaint was founded and satisfactorily addressed by the field agency and the student should remain in the field placement.

B). The complaint was founded and satisfactorily addressed by the field agency but the student should be placed in an alternative field placement.

C). The complaint was founded and not satisfactorily addressed by the field agency and the student should be placed in another field placement.

D). The complaint was founded and not satisfactorily addressed and the field agency should no longer be approved as a field setting.

E). The complaint was unfounded and the student should remain in the placement.

F). The complaint was unfounded and the student should be placed in an alternative field site.

The complainant following these procedures is in no way inhibited from pursuing other options such as bringing the matter to the attention of the University’s Affirmative Action Officer or pursuing legal remedy. No student will be subject to restraint, interference, coercion, or reprisal for seeking information about sexual harassment, filing a sexual harassment complaint or serving as a witness. For more information, contact the FAMU Office of Equal Opportunity at (850) 599-3706.

**Drug and Alcohol**

Florida A&M University will not tolerate the sale, possession, or use of controlled substances with the exception of medication prescribed by a physician and taken in accordance with the prescribed usage. The use, sale, possession, manufacturing, and bartering of narcotic drugs, central nervous system stimulants, hallucinogenic drugs, or barbiturates as defined by Federal, State, or University regulations shall be prohibited in all FAMU facilities about the campus or in any public gathering, recreational areas or facilities. This includes any practicum site where a student is placed. Any student in violation of this policy may be subject to dismissal from the University in accordance with the procedures of the Student Conduct Code. This includes termination from the field practicum site and the BSW Program. This termination will be final. In addition, legal sanctions by a court of competent jurisdiction may include a specific term of
imprisonment with an appropriate fine. The court may also decree the forfeiture of property, suspend or cancel a license, remove a person from office, or impose any other civil penalty.

Termination Policy for Academic of Unprofessional/Non-Academic Conduct
A student may be removed or dismissed from the field practicum site and the Field Education Program at any time by the Field Instructor and/or the field agency for documented unprofessional conduct. Unprofessional conduct may include but is not limited to behavior that may be hazardous, unethical, illegal, unprofessional to the client, agency or faculty system, or commitment of a breach in confidentiality. There are serious consequences to egregious behavior. Additional infractions are listed in the Protocol for Field Related Problem Solving. A student may also be removed or dismissed for demonstrable lack of progress in achieving field practicum learning objectives in the course of the practicum experience. A written statement attesting to this action will be prepared by the Field Instructor in consultation with the Faculty Liaison for inclusion in the student’s file. The Field Coordinator/Director should be informed of this action by the Faculty Liaison. At such point in time, the Coordinator/Director will then notify the Program Director and Department Chair of the matter. The decision to terminate a student from a practicum can be difficult. Making the decision to terminate or assign a grade of “D” or below for agency performance may be aided by answering the following three questions truthfully:

1. Would I hire this student?
2. Would I be willing to supervise this student as an employee?
3. Would I want to be served by this student if I were a client?

A negative response to any of these questions warrants careful deliberation. This should assist the Field Instructor in clarifying their decision. Every effort should be made to protect the students’ rights. However, these rights must be carefully balanced against the professional obligation to assure quality in service delivery to clients. The professions first obligation is to the clients it serves. If after careful consideration, the decision to terminate is made then the decision to terminate shall be final.

In case of a lack of progress by the student due process will be followed. This entails providing written notification by the Field Instructor and if applicable, the Task Supervisor to the student regarding their unacceptable performance. The written notification shall include specific expectations for the student’s progress. These expectations will be discussed with the student in consultation with the Field Instructor and Faculty Liaison. A copy of the notification will be placed in the student’s file. Failure by the student to meet these expectations shall result in termination. This decision shall be final.
The procedures for termination are intended to provide a fair system of due process while simultaneously protecting the rights of all parties involved and the well-being of students, current and future clients. It is vital that during the weekly supervision meetings between the Field Instructor and student(s), that documentation of each meeting be recorded onto the field practicum timesheet.

The field courses are distinct from most other university courses in that field placement in the community entails not only educational objectives for the student and faculty, but also professional responsibilities to clients, social service agencies, and the community. Among the students’ responsibilities to their education is the responsibility to utilize ongoing feedback from the faculty and agency supervisors. *When students engage clients and assume service responsibilities, there are ongoing professional, educational and ethical responsibilities and courtesies to be considered.* Also, considerable time and effort is spent on the part of faculty and community supervisors to plan and deliver a good field placement. For this reason, it is a serious matter to drop the field course during the semester.

Students drop courses for many reasons including: educational considerations, serious illness or personal crises, and occasionally for performance problems. It is this last reason, namely problems in the field course, that the following policy is addressed.

**DROPPING and RE-ENTERING FIELD COURSES (When Performance Problems is an Issue)**

Any student who drops the field course(s) following substantial performance problems as noted by the Faculty Liaison, Field Instructor or Field Coordinator will not be allowed to reenroll the following semester without special review and permission of the Field Coordinator, Program Director and Field Faculty Committee. The usual procedure will be for students to take time off from field to address underlying deficits which impair their performance such as knowledge or interpersonal skill deficits, personal problems, personality or maturity factors, attendance problems, situational or circumstantial factors, etc. as noted by the Faculty Liaison or Field Instructor. Growth and development in these areas may require additional work and life experience, personal counseling or therapy, circumstantial changes which enhance a student’s stability, and remedial learning experiences.

The review criteria will focus on the likelihood of successful performance in the field course based on criteria such as; nature and severity of the performance problem, ability to integrate the content and develop the skills required in the field course, student’s motivation toward corrective action, judgment of the student’s ability to hear and use feedback constructively, availability and use of educational, career advising, and therapeutic resources.
The student must present documentation to the BSW Office of Field Education and Program Director stating specific improvements in underlying deficits that initiated the decision to drop field. It should clarify the students’ efforts toward growth and change which will support the likelihood of satisfactory performance in the field. This documentation will be shared with the Faculty Field Committee and former Field Instructor/Task Supervisor.

A meeting will be held between all parties to discuss the student’s request to re-enter the practicum. There should be no communication with the student by the BSW Faculty or agency personnel prior to the meeting. This is recommended for the purpose of avoiding any appearance of inappropriately attempting to influence the outcome of the process. The meeting shall be presided over by the Field Coordinator. If the former Field Instructor is unavailable, their designee or a representative from the same or similar field of practice should be present. The meeting will be held within 10 business days of the receipt of the request by the BSW Field Office. The Field Coordinator will notify all participants of the date, location and time of the meeting. The student will have the opportunity to answer questions and share specific issues which he/she feels addresses their improvement and preparedness for field. Immediately following the meeting, the committee will conduct a closed meeting to discuss and make its’ recommendation. The recommendation will be written by the Field Coordinator and forwarded to the student, meeting participants, Program Director and Chair. Due to the skilled practice and professional knowledge of the Field Instructor, considerable weight will be given to their input toward the recommendation. If the student is granted permission to re-enter the practicum courses, information regarding the problem areas and suggested corrective actions, will be shared with prospective field agencies and Field Instructors. This policy has the dual purpose of protecting the well being of the agency and its clientele as well as assuring the student receives an adequate opportunity and resources to improve his or her performance. However, if the student does not successfully complete the program, termination shall be final.

All students have the right of due process. If a student wishes to appeal a decision, he/she may refer to the Student Handbook section on Student Grievance Procedures for the College of Arts and Sciences.

Under certain circumstances, the BSW Program may initiate the removal of a student from a practicum site due to problems operating within the agency. These problems may create uncertainty for the student, hence; have an adverse impact on the quality of the practicum experience. Such problems can range from agency reorganization to the unplanned resignation
of the Field Instructor, to sexual harassment. When such problems occur, the Faculty Liaison and/or Field Coordinator will assess the problem by investigating the placement, as warranted and allowed by the circumstances. The outcome of the assessment will determine whether the student will remain with the agency or be reassigned to another practicum site. The agency will be notified by the Faculty Liaison or Field Coordinator of its’ concerns.

If the findings of the investigation determine it would be in the best interest of the student to remove him/her from the present site, as soon as it is feasible to do so, every effort should be made to initiate the transfer of the student to a new site. The agency will be notified of the impending move. If possible, the student should alert his/her clients of the impending move. This should be performed for the purpose of minimizing any emotional trauma the client population might experience due to the move.