

# **CSU-GLOBAL UNDERGRADUATE PRACTICUM HANDBOOK**

*This handbook provides further information as to the expectations and procedures of CSU-Global-approved practicums.*

# INTRODUCTION

Colorado State University-Global Campus offers students the opportunity to gain practical experience by conducting a practicum in the field of their choice. This manual is designed to provide students, instructors, fieldwork supervisors, and practicum organizations the guidance necessary for success in these options. Expectations of the role of the student, supervisor, and the organization are clearly illustrated in this manual and will serve as a guide for all parties during the student's practicum experience.

When a student with a disability or special need notifies the Practicum/ coordinator, guidance to the field supervisor regarding recommended accommodations will be provided. It is essential that students requiring accommodations clearly articulate their individual needs and collaborate with the Practicum/ Coordinator and field supervisor to arrange for a positive, rewarding, and successful practicum experience.

## PURPOSE OF THIS PRACTICUM

The practicum provides students with practical experience in organizations specific to their fields. Each student will work under the direct supervision of a senior-level professional at an approved organization or company. The purpose of the practicum is for students to apply and integrate what they have learned during the core courses of their programs. Each student will be enrolled in an online course and will be required to participate in coursework that will allow them to demonstrate what has been learned through the practicum experience. The emphasis of the practicum will be on the student assuming a professional role within the organization. Students will complete their practicums over a period of eight weeks during one CSU-Global course. A minimum of 80 hours of practicum fieldwork must be completed during the course. Practicums are generally located in office environments and should not put the student in an environment where they will encounter unnecessary risk.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- The student must complete coursework per the practicum requirements.
- The student must be in good standing at CSU-Global.
- The student must begin the application process prior to the start of the practicum and have university approval before the course begins.
- The student must pass all required clearances for the state in which the practicum is being conducted.

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students requiring accommodations due to qualifying conditions will have the same access to practicum experiences under these guidelines established for all students, and are expected to fulfill the same standards and requirements.

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# GETTING STARTED

## SECURING A RELEVANT PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE

Students may seek out potential practicum sites, but before they apply for a potential work placement they should consult the course instructor, who will forward the inquiry to the Practicum/ Coordinator (P/I-C). After this inquiry, the student will receive an orientation to the overall program and receive a practicum application package, which is comprised of this manual and all supporting forms. Students recommending sites must submit to course instructor and P/I-C a description of duties and activities of the workplace or organization, as well as onsite sponsorship details. P/I-C will contact the field supervisor at the selected site to discuss and clarify mutual requirements and expectations, including credit and time requirements, evaluation procedures, and duration of the practicum.

Students researching a practicum should consider the following suggestions.

- Research local opportunities. Advertised practicums might provide an avenue to explore. A media search, including print and internet, will reveal many workplace opportunities.
- Access available lists of companies or organizations that have offered practicums in the past. Such lists of potential workplaces open to practicums are good starting points. Some of the best sources of this information will be friends in related fields of study, relatives, neighbors, and so on. These individuals might be aware of organizations, companies or government entities that routinely sponsor practicums.
- Faculty is another great resource. Consult your instructor and P/I-C to determine if established practicum relationships already exist.

The prospective practicum student should consider the answers to the following questions.

- What are your professional interests and career goals?
- What kind of work experience do you already have that supports your targeted practicum?
- What kind of knowledge and skills would you like to acquire in your workplace practicum?

- What kind of organization or work environment appeals to you?
- What special skills or limitations do you possess that might impact your targeted practicum?
- What kind of contribution would you like to make to the organization?

## BEGINNING YOUR PRACTICUM

The student wishing to enroll in a practicum should notify the Practicum/ Coordinator a full term before they plan to register for the course. The student will work with the P/I-C to identify an appropriate organization in which to conduct the practicum.

The student will work with the P/I-C throughout the interview and selection process. Students are encouraged to apply to several organizations.

Once the student is accepted by the organization for a practicum, the student will work with the P/I-C to ensure that all paperwork is completed.

The student and the field supervisor at the practicum organization will develop a Learning Agreement and contract that must be approved by the school's P/I-C prior to the start of the practicum.

The student and the field supervisor at the organization will include in the Learning Agreement a schedule that the student will follow.

Students must complete all of their hours at the practicum worksite. If a student is ill, he or she will be required to make up these hours.

Students must read, sign, and submit CSU-Global's Release Form to the P/I-C prior to beginning the practicum.

The student will not be able to begin the practicum until all of the above prerequisite steps have been followed and the appropriate paperwork has been completed.

## LEARNING AGREEMENT

The student and the field supervisor must complete a Learning Agreement and contract prior to the start of the practicum. These documents will serve as guides for the

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student's experiences at the practicum site. The plan will detail the expected work activities and times of work, as well as goals for the student, and will serve as the basis for evaluation of the student's performance. This document will be signed by the student, the Practicum/ Coordinator, and the organization's field supervisor. Any subsequent alterations require approval by all three parties.

### **USING THE STUDENT'S JOB AS A PRACTICUM**

Some students may already be employed in the field and want to conduct practicums at their places of employment. This is permissible provided that all other requirements are met and adhered to, and at least 50% of the student's duties are new tasks (substantially different from the student's typical job functions).

# DURING YOUR PRACTICUM

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

Students must be supervised on site by a senior-level professional field supervisor. The supervisor will be required to meet with the student once a week for one hour and will be the point of contact between the organization and CSU-Global. This weekly hour of supervision may be applied towards the total 10 hours per week of required work at the practicum site.

All practicum locations must be approved by the Provost or his/her designee and meet the conditions of the Practicum/Internship Site Policy.

Students are not permitted to work third shifts (spanning overnight).

Students may not transport the organization's personnel or clients in their personal vehicles. If an organizational vehicle is provided, the organization must provide insurance coverage.

Students must read, sign, and submit CSU-Global's release forms prior to beginning the practicum.

Students should demonstrate professional behavior during their practicums and follow all guidelines for professional conduct (including dress codes) applicable to the organization in question.

## PRACTICUM COURSE

Students will be enrolled in a practicum course during their practicums. Students in the course will be required to participate in weekly reflective discussions as well as submit Weekly Hours Logs, Midterm and Final Evaluations from their field supervisors, and a final reflective Portfolio Project written assignment. Evaluations by the field supervisors provide constructive feedback to the students and the instructor.

## GRADING

Practicum students are evaluated on a 1,000-point scale, per the standard model for CSU-Global courses, with successful completion based on achievement of a final score of 800 points or better and at least 80 hours of documented workplace service over the course of the term.

The breakdown of points is as follows:

- Discussion forum participation (25 points/week = 200 points)
- Submitting weekly logs verifying 80 hours of practicum activity over the course of eight weeks (25 points/week = 200 points)
- Midterm (Week 4) and final (Week 8) evaluations of student performance plus associated conferences with the course instructor (150 points each = 300 points total)
- Portfolio Project: Reflection on the practicum experience (300 points)

Midterm and final evaluations as completed by the field supervisor will be considered in student grades insofar as they establish that students have completed the requirements of their practicum. These requirements are determined by the instructor in conference with the student.

In circumstances where the field supervisor believes the student is not minimally meeting performance standards of the position and is not fulfilling the Learning Agreement commitments, feedback to this effect will be provided to the P/I-Coordinator and instructor for immediate action. This feedback will be considered in the final grade adjudication, especially, if reasonable improvements in student performance are not obvious.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Course Instructor

The role of the course instructor in the success of the practicum experience is essential. Therefore, it is crucial that these roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated. To the extent that course modules permit, each practicum is individualized and outlined in the Learning Agreement. The course instructor assures alignment between the course module and expectations included in the Learning Agreement.

Below are essential expectations for these roles and responsibilities.

- Facilitate the Learning Agreement between the field supervisor and student.
- Manage the communications of the progress of students to the employers at the work site.

## DURING YOUR PRACTICUM

- Conduct phone/webcast meetings with field supervisor and student.
- Follow up with student and field supervisor on issues requiring timely feedback.
- Record or document webcasts or phone meetings.
- Complete the final evaluation of the student.
- Monitor credit hours accumulated by the student.

### **Practicum/Internship Coordinator (P/I-C)**

- Identify, recruit, and orient employer partners.
- Promote the program to teachers, students, and parents.
- Recruit and prepare students for employer partners to interview.
- Coordinate the alignment of curriculum to establish, maintain, and sustain relevancy of course work with workplace expectations.
- Review, revise, and improve practicum programs.
- Secure all necessary paperwork, including learning agreement, application, and liability waiver, from the student and field supervisor.
- Provide field supervisor and course instructor with the most relevant experience for the student, and assist with any conflict resolution.

### **Field Supervisor**

Essential components of the practicum program are career-enhancing attitudes and behaviors that employers expect from their employees, such as punctuality, teamwork, and conflict resolution. Although many organizations have such policies in place for their employees, it may be helpful for the practicum student to have common sense workplace practices spelled out for them in order to avoid confusion. The field supervisor's role is critical. Field supervisors are the main contact in the workplace and serve as mentors, providing feedback coaching and suggestions for improvement throughout the duration of the practicum. These responsibilities are exceedingly rewarding, yet challenging. In addition to being the primary workplace contact for the student and course instructor, the field supervisor will often assign and explain projects and tasks, assist the

student with the development of good workplace routines, serve as a role model, and collaborate with the course instructor to develop the learning agreement.

Among the specific responsibilities for the field supervisor are:

- Setting work hours.
- Monitoring attendance.
- Ensuring compliance with workplace policies.
- Assigning work and monitoring performance.
- Providing training for the practicum tasks.
- Providing feedback and conducting performance evaluations.
- Providing encouragement and coaching.
- Helping the student feel accepted among workplace peers.
- Establishing consequences if work or behavior is unacceptable.

### **Sponsoring Organization**

- The organization must be willing to provide the student with one hour of one-to-one supervision by a master's-level professional (field supervisor) each week during the course of the practicum or practicums.
- The organization must submit an evaluation of the student's performance twice during the eight-week practicum or practicum (once at the end of Week 4 and again at the end of Week 8).

### **Practicum Student**

Preparing the practicum student for this authentic learning experience will begin with an orientation to the program. The student and course instructor should understand the intricacies and expectations of the program, including what is expected from them and what they can expect from the field supervisor. Prior to actual placement, the student should:

- Select potential sites in consultation with course instructor and P/I-C.

## DURING YOUR PRACTICUM

- Schedule and complete interviews with on-site workplace contacts.
- Submit application for practicum placement well in advance of deadline.
- Arrange a work schedule with the field supervisor.
- Complete a learning agreement.
- In consultation with field supervisor, course instructor and P/I-C, confirm goals and objectives prepared as a portion of the learning agreement.
- Keep an accurate written record of activities.
- Prepare for individual coaching sessions and fully engage in the process.
- Complete all requirements and assignments.
- Provide audio, video, or transcriptions of sessions, as required by the P/I-C or course instructor.
- Arrange for workplace visits from P/I-C, if possible, or organize web-based conferencing.
- Return required paperwork in a timely manner (especially logs, topical papers, reflective journal and portfolio).
- Comply with all legal and ethical regulations.
- Bring all potential legal and ethical issues to the attention of the course instructor and P/I-C.
- Cooperate with the field supervisor, course instructor, and P/I-C.
- Remain eager and interested in constructive feedback about performance.

## PRACTICUM SUCCESS FACTORS

### Introduce and Interact

Successful work relationships require excellent communication skills. Your field supervisor, other supervisors, and coworkers might be immersed in projects and deadlines. They will not necessarily take notice that you are new to the organization, so take the initiative to introduce yourself and exhibit a positive and friendly attitude to everyone you meet. Professional relationships are essential in starting a

career and participating in a successful practicum. Establishing a professional network will assist you to explore new opportunities and provide meaningful avenues to advance in your chosen field.

### Professionalism

Exude professionalism by remaining positive and supportive of your supervisors, coworkers, clients, and customers. Learn the mission and vision of the organization and aim toward understanding and achieving both during your stay. Always make efficient use of your time and ask for additional tasks if your duties allow for down time. Never use your computer or phone during company time for personal emails or calls. Students are expected to adhere to the hours they have established with the field supervisor to adhere to any dress or behavioral codes of their chosen workplace, and to perform responsibilities in a professional manner, as if they were a paid employee.

### Positive and Energetic Attitude

Remember that you are not only a guest of the organization; you are also an ambassador of CSU-Global. When you are asked to perform a task, be certain you have the requisite instructions and engage fully. You should be willing to volunteer for extra duties and to do more than what is needed. Practice the positive. You are an invited guest with a job to do; do it well and display your eagerness and enterprise in all tasks assigned to you. Work diligently to gain the relevant skills employers are seeking in your field of study.

### Study the Workplace Skill Set

Passion for and knowledge of one's field distinguishes successful employees from less successful ones. Your passion will be noticed by your supervisors and workplace colleagues, as will your reputation for reliability, responsibility, and dedication. Being known for trustworthiness, competence and a "can do" attitude will serve you well in the practicum and beyond.

### Understand the Climate and Culture of the Workplace

Find out as much as you can about the organization before you start a practicum. Those with whom and for whom you work will notice that you are conversant in the climate and culture of the organization. Stories you hear from employees – good and bad – will help you to understand the climate. Remember, you will likely be present for a relatively short time, so avoid the negative story tellers, as these individuals will not aid you on your path toward competence and success.

## DURING YOUR PRACTICUM

### **LIABILITY**

Liability for a practicum experience can vary from state to state and certainly from country to country. The overall circumstance of the practicum and any liability exposure will need to be vetted by the Provost or his/her designee before any commitment is made to the prospective sponsoring organization or company. Also, clearly documented expectations and understanding regarding liability should be developed collaboratively among the field supervisor, Practicum/Internship Coordinator, and the practicum student. It is usually customary that when compensation is provided during a practicum that the student is then considered an employee. This employee status mostly protects the student from allegations related to assigned work. As a political subdivision of the State of Colorado, liability for CSU-Global is covered under Governmental Immunity (C.R.S. 24-10-106). However, individual student liability is not covered. Students should consider obtaining a policy to cover their personal liability and/or check their homeowner insurance policy to see if it would cover their individual situation.

# APPENDIX

The following is a list of direct links to the forms that you will need as you complete your Practicum or Internship with CSU-Global.

*Criminal Background Release and Waiver  
Practicum/Internship Liability Release Form  
Practicum/Internship Learning Agreement  
Weekly Practicum/Internship Hours Log  
Midterm Evaluation of Student Performance  
Final Evaluation of Student Performance*



Colorado State University-Global Campus (CSU-Global) was created by the Colorado State University System Board of Governors in 2007 as the first independent 100% online state university in the United States.

CSU-Global is focused on facilitating adult success in a global marketplace through career-relevant education including bachelor's degree completion and master's degree programs. Embracing the land grant heritage as part of the CSU System, CSU-Global sets the standard for quality and innovation in higher education through its expert faculty trained in working with adults in an online learning environment, and through its dedication to student retention, graduation, and workplace success. Visit [CSUGlobal.edu](http://CSUGlobal.edu) or call 1-800-920-6723 for more information.



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