

You will earn four (4) credits for the practicum. You may not take any other coursework while you are doing your practicum, unless you are in the SESP Honors Program, for which you may also take SESP 391 (Advanced Research Methods)

F – THE PRACTICUM

The practicum is a vital component of your undergraduate education. The practicum is comprised of a one-term, off-campus, unpaid academic internship in an organization relevant to your concentration. In addition to the work that you perform at your site, you also take field notes of your observations of workplace interactions, workplace culture, and other workplace dynamics. Thus, through the practicum, you apply analytical frameworks and knowledge from previous coursework to your worksite to gain a pragmatic, first-hand perspective on what organizations in your field do, how they function, and how – as a social science researcher – you make sense of what you observe.

The practicum consists of an internship and a seminar.

- A. **The practicum internship** – In the internship, you work in a professional work setting related to your major concentration, receive supervision from experienced mentors, develop professional relationships, and gain valuable work skills that will benefit you both in your senior year and in your professional life after graduation. Your work may include assisting clients, assisting with research, implementing programs, analyzing policies, assisting with assessment, making presentations, upgrading technology, or a variety of other interesting tasks.
- B. **The practicum seminar** - During this three-hour class on Friday mornings, you will integrate your knowledge from prior coursework with your observations of human behavior within the setting of the organization at which you are completing your practicum. At each class, you will submit field notes that you have taken during the week. Through the process of writing your field notes, you will reflect upon your experiences in the professional environment and develop your ability to be a social sciences field researcher. At the end of the practicum, you will submit a final paper, in which you examine a workplace theme in greater depth. In this class you will also explore issues that are both specific to your field and common to all workplaces through discussions with classmates who are working at other interesting sites.

The process leading up to your practicum consists of seven (7) steps.

1. **Attending the “Sophomore Meeting”** to learn about the practicum and to identify the quarter and city in which you will complete your practicum.

If you are a SESP student in the fall of your sophomore year, you must attend this mandatory meeting, which is held at University Career Services (UCS). If you transfer to

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SESP after fall quarter of your sophomore year, you will attend the meeting immediately following the deadline to submit the interschool transfer application.

At that meeting, you will learn about the details of the practicum, tour UCS, and hear from a panel of seniors who will talk about the various ways to get the most out of your education during your remaining quarters at Northwestern. You will also sign up for an individual meeting with your advisor.

2. **Meeting with your advisor** to review the opportunities presented at the Sophomore Meeting and to map out your remaining requirements, including when you will complete the practicum and take SESP 372.

After the Sophomore Meeting, but before your individual meeting with your advisor, you should consider when and where you would like to complete your practicum. When considering your options, remember:

- You must complete your practicum during your junior year, or during the summer before or after your junior year. You may not complete your practicum during your senior year.
- You must complete the practicum in metropolitan Chicago, unless you participate in the San Francisco or Washington D.C. Field Studies Programs, which are held in the summer.
- If you participate in either the Washington D.C. or the San Francisco Field Studies Program, you must live in housing that SESP provides. You may, however, be exempt from this requirement if your parent(s) live in the metropolitan area of either city.
- If you complete the field studies program in Washington D.C. or San Francisco during the summer between your sophomore year and junior year and complete two or more terms studying abroad in your junior year, you will need to enroll for three (3) full quarters during your senior year to satisfy the Undergraduate Residence Requirement. If you are interested in the Washington D.C. or San Francisco programs and wish to graduate after winter quarter of your senior year, work with your adviser to complete the field studies during the summer AFTER your junior year.
- *If you are a transfer student, you must be enrolled as a SESP student for a minimum of two quarters before doing your practicum.*

3. **Successfully completing SESP 372, Methods of Observing Human Behavior.**

This course is designed to familiarize you with the methods and techniques for conducting social science research. You will learn how to take field notes, which become the source of data for your practicum research and final paper. You will typically enroll in the class one quarter before the practicum.

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In addition to SESP 372, other courses may provide you with a foundation of knowledge in your chosen field. Talk with your peers and your adviser about which classes might best prepare you for this applied experience.

4. Submitting your practicum proposal.

The proposal is a key component to preparing you to search for and secure an optimal practicum site. The proposal consists of 1) your resume (reviewed by University Career Services); 2) registration with the University Alumni Office; 3) a series of short essays that allow you to synthesize and articulate your educational goals, career interests, internship options, and the relationship of these factors to your coursework plan and concentration; and 4) an initial identification of those sites that interest you. You will have access to previous site information and evaluations via Blackboard. Your proposal is due at a workshop that we call "Practicality," which takes place the second week of the quarter preceding your planned practicum quarter; however, if you intend to do a summer practicum in Washington D.C., San Francisco, or Chicago, you must submit your proposal at the beginning of winter quarter.

5. Attending a workshop "Practicality."

At the Practicality workshop, you will learn about the steps you will take to search for a practicum site and you will schedule a mock interview with your adviser.

6. Searching for your practicum site.

The selection of your practicum site is key to the quality of experience you will have. Information regarding approved sites for your concentration and where students have completed their practicum in past years is located on Blackboard. Previous student evaluations of their experiences at these sites are also available. In evaluating the reports of past students, keep in mind that students may not have participated in the same type of activities or projects that you may be assigned. Most organizations work to tailor your practicum activities to your particular interests. You may also discover sites through your own research or by asking your adviser or the practicum director for recommendations about sites that would fit your interests and career. The practicum director must approve all site choices.

Refer to the Practicum Proposal and Practicum Contract for more information.

7. Completing a practicum contract in which you and your future practicum supervisor identify the projects on which you will be working at the site and what expectations you and your supervisor have going into the experience. The contract becomes an official document only once signed by your supervisor and the Dean of SESP; *thus, students may not begin the practicum until a fully executed copy is on file with the Practicum Director.*

RELATED INFORMATION:

Refer to Section 3, pg. 53 for information on Practicum and Secondary Teaching Pre-registration

Refer to Section 3, pg. 53 for information on Registration in Absentia

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