

Field Placement Guidelines

Introduction

The purpose of these guidelines is to define standards and procedures for the management of Psychology 495, Field Placement in Psychology.

The goal of this course is to provide practical training in field settings. Students gain excellent backgrounds in theoretical and scientific psychology through their course work. Often this background is more meaningful and enriched by its translation to realistic situations in various settings. Field Placement in Psychology is designed to accomplish this objective.

Scientific Objectives

Objectives of Field Placement in Psychology are summarized as follows:

- To provide an overview of agency or organization services and procedures, including policies, and human resources in specific settings.
- To develop an orientation to the variety of problems and practices in an agency or organizational setting.
- To provide an awareness of a specific agency or organization in relationship to the total range of community services and activities.
- To develop sensitivity to and knowledge of factors which influence work in an agency or organization.
- To develop interpersonal skills in working with a select agency clientele or organization work force.
- To develop an understanding of professional ethics.

Site Characteristics

The field placement of students is considered a cooperative venture between the Department of Psychology at James Madison University and a specific agency in the field. Sites accepting students must sign a letter of agreement that is a contractual agreement between the agency or organization and the university.

The placement of a student for training should provide maximum flexibility for learning by the student. At the same time, the student should be able to contribute to the on-going services of the agency or organization.

The primary consideration in placement of a student with an agency or organization is the adequacy of that site as a viable learning resource for the student. Approved sites will vary in the type of experience offered to the student.

FIELD PLACEMENT CREDIT IS NOT OFFERED UNLESS THE STUDENT IS ENROLLED IN THE COURSE AT THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED TIME AND ATTENDING THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED CLASS. Thus, FIELD PLACEMENT CREDIT IS NOT GIVEN FOR WORK IN THE SUMMER AT A DISTANT LOCATION.

Students who wish to earn credit in the summer should consider doing an independent study (Psychology 402). The student is responsible for finding a Psychology professor who is willing to supervise the independent study.

Student Responsibilities

Students with a cumulative 3.0 GPA are preferred. Seniors are given preference, with juniors accepted if there are open spaces. A junior may be considered in the same group as seniors if the junior plans to do an honors thesis or is planning to spend part of their senior year abroad. Interested juniors of any status are encouraged to apply, however, as a way of planning for their senior year and becoming acquainted with the course coordinator.

Students must apply and be selected for the course. Typically more students apply than can be accommodated. The application deadline is generally the third week of the semester. (Thus, a January deadline if field placement is taken in the fall and a September deadline for field placement in the spring semester). Check with the course instructor for specific deadlines which can vary from one semester to another. This information may also be noted in the E-mail News and on the electronic sign.

Students who are selected for enrollment in Psychology 495 choose three sites and several alternates for an interview. Interviews are set. The sites will then make offers to the students. The student can choose a placement from the offers received. No site is required to take students or to take a particular number. If none of the initial sites are suitable, interviews can be arranged at additional sites until a suitable site placement is found. Thus, site selection is a competitive process similar to a job interview.

After the initial group of students is placed, students on the waiting list can be matched, if possible and if the course still has room, with openings at remaining sites.

Agency descriptions are available on-line at the Psychology Department website. Prospective students should review the available placements prior to their initial interview with the course coordinator.

Students are expected to demonstrate a capacity for mature, professional behavior. Students will be expected to complete readings, reports, and other assignments given by the coordinator and supervisor. Since Field Placement is a "capstone" course, requirements include an APA style paper integrating the student's experience and an hour-long presentation. Please see syllabus for a list of specific requirements. Students are expected to read and to be familiar with the Ethical Principles of Psychologists. The coordinator and the agency supervisor will jointly determine a program of activities individually prescribed to meet the needs of the student. The student will be included in this process.

Agency/Organization Responsibilities

The agency or organization will designate a qualified specialist to serve as field supervisor for the student. Agencies and organizations are expected to provide suitable experiences for the student. Examples of activities include:

- Observations of counseling interviews, evaluations, conferences, meetings groups, classes and the like.
- Supervised interviews with clients or workers, if in an industrial setting.
- Maintenance of records and reports.
- Visits to other area agencies and special services.
- Assisting in groups.
- Gathering data for research or social histories.
- Assisting in training activities.
- Planning and running non-therapy groups (teaching social skills, cooking group, children's activity group, parent information classes, and others).
- Meeting individually with clients to do adjunctive support such as social skills training.
- Scoring testing.
- Help with advocacy or educational activities.
- Attending conferences or training sessions.
- Learning how to write social histories and other reports.
- Assisting with special projects (redesigning a performance appraisal system; performing a job analysis; web site design; creation of materials for clients).

NOTE: STUDENTS ARE NOT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN ANY DIRECT UNSUPERVISED COUNSELING OR THERAPY DELIVERY

Supervision of Students

Supervision of students is a joint responsibility of the Department of Psychology course coordinator, and the specialist in the agency/organization, or field supervisor. It is preferred, but not required, that field supervisors hold a professional license and belong to at least one professional association.

The course coordinator and field supervisor will provide orientation for the student early in the placement. Evaluation by the field supervisor will be at both midterm and at the end of the course. Grading of the student will be a joint effort between the course coordinator and field supervisor. Since PSYC 495 is a capstone, the field work portion counts less than half of the grade while the capstone requirements are more than half of the grade. See the syllabus for further grading criteria.

Student Conduct

The student will conduct himself/herself so as to perform at his/her highest level of functioning at all times. The student has a responsibility to represent the agency/organization and James Madison University in an exemplary manner. Agencies may dismiss students who do not adhere to policies and procedures of the agency.

Student Competencies

Sites differ in the skills, abilities, and knowledge that students can learn. Students will develop learning goals in conjunction with supervisors. Common learning goals may include:

- Ability to listen and respond to clients as customers.
- Development of effective verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Development of effective written communication.
- Increased awareness of one's personal strengths and weaknesses.
- Acceptance of responsibility.
- Development of initiative and creative thinking.
- Development of critical thinking skills.