

SMITH COLLEGE
School for Social Work

M.S.W. PRACTICUM LEARNING GUIDE

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PRACTICUM LEARNING OVERVIEW

Practicum Learning is one of the most salient experiences of students' social work education. This is the primary place where students are afforded an opportunity to integrate their academic knowledge from the summer sessions with actual clinical social work practice. Clinical internship and seminar take place in Sessions 2 and 4 of the School's Block Plan.

Successful completion of 60 credits in courses Practicum Learning in Social Work SOCW 580 and SOCW 680 is required for degree conferral and includes:

- 1920 hours of agency internship (960 hours/year at minimum of 4 days/week over 32 weeks, plus a two week winter vacation)
- Learning plan, engagement in internship evaluation process, and weekly process recordings with clinical supervisor(s)
- Practicum assignments (8 monthly narratives/internship year, 2 papers/internship year) to PFA

Successful completion of 4 credits in courses Practicum Seminar SOCW 581 and SOCW 681 is required for degree conferral and includes:

- 10 session evening course in virtual classroom that runs concurrently with internship

Practicum Learning Objectives

The Smith College School for Social Work has overarching objectives for both the first and second year internship experiences:

1. Professional Identity

The student will develop a professional identity as a clinical social worker that is characterized by competence in a broad range of social work skills, knowledge, and values.

2. Professional Ethics and Value Dilemmas

The student will learn to apply the values and ethics of the profession and develop the capacity to tolerate and work constructively with the value dilemmas, conflicts, and ambiguities inherent in the practice of social work.

3. Knowledge

The student will obtain varied opportunities to utilize and build upon the theoretical and empirical knowledge gained during the summer academic sessions toward preparation for practice.

4. **Skill**

The student will develop a repertoire of practice skills fundamental to social work relevant to a wide range of clients, modalities, and types of settings.

5. **Student Engagement in the Learning Process**

The student will actively engage in the learning process and develop the capacity to reflect on the work, making active use of supervision and other feedback.

6. **Internal Awareness of Self**

The student will develop a self-reflective and reflexive stance, which includes a growing awareness of self with clients, staff, and larger systems, in relation to practice.

7. **Philosophy of Practice**

The student will develop a philosophy towards practice that recognizes the interdependence between the individual and the environment, the critical importance of the worker-client relationship, the complexity of the human condition, and an appreciation and respect for differences between people.

8. **Social Problem Analysis**

The student will develop the ability to identify, analyze, and respond to critical social problems and to understand the impact they have on clients.

9. **Social Justice**

The student will develop a knowledge base and the related skills needed to work for social justice on behalf of populations at risk.

10. **Anti-racism Work**

The student will be able to identify and recognize the pernicious effects of racism on individuals and groups and develop skills to combat racism.

11. **Agency-based Practice**

The student will develop an understanding of the agency's organizational structure and relevant factors which impact the provision of service to clients.

12. Collaboration

The student will develop the ability to work collaboratively with other professionals and the community at large in their role as a professional social worker.

13. Monitoring and Evaluation of Practice

The student will develop a sense of professional self-awareness, the ability to appraise and evaluate personal work based on empirical evidence and prepare for future scholarship.

14. Critical Thinking

The student will develop and demonstrate the skills of critical thinking.

Practice Competencies for Practicum Learning

The [Council for Social Work Education \(CSWE\)](#) has set forth the following 9 practice competencies that guide internship learning:

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
Competency 4: Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice
Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Commitment to Anti-Racism

The School shares with the social work profession its historic commitment to struggle against inequality and oppression, to recognize the pernicious consequences of racism, and to work to identify and overcome the overt and covert aspects of racism. Today the school upholds its commitment to antiracism through its [Five Core Principles](#). The Office of Practicum Learning works to identify placements that reflect social justice and racial justice commitments.

Discussions about the impact of racism, oppression and intersecting identities take place throughout the internship experience. First-year MSW students complete a structural analysis assignment entitled “Understanding Your Agency” which focuses in part on the internship agency policies and/or practices as they relate to issues of race and anti-racism work. Both first and second year practicum seminars incorporate a structural assessment as part of the case analysis and presentation in class. All students and faculty advisers are invited to utilize a [Sotomayor Fellow](#) for confidential consultations regarding issues of ableism, racism, and oppression while in the internship experience.

Structures and Roles

Overall management of the internship program is provided by the Senior Director of Practicum Learning and the Practicum Learning Department, which consists of a Director of Practicum Learning in the MSW program and one Associate Director, Practicum Systems Manager, and administrative support staff. Practicum Faculty members are actively involved in developing and implementing policies and procedures through work in the Practicum Development and Planning Committee, Practicum Placement Committee, and annual Practicum Faculty Adviser and Practicum Seminar faculty meetings. Practicum curriculum and policies are governed by the School’s resident faculty and deans. Additional feedback on program issues and changes is sought in collaboration with students and participating internship partners.

Students work closely throughout the year with their PFAs and also have a [designated practicum director](#) based on the geographic area of their internship.

Student Role as a Developing Professional

Ethics

As adult learners, students are expected to be full participants in their internship learning and to engage in a professional manner with their Practicum Faculty Advisers, with the members of the Office of Practicum Learning, and at their agencies at all times, guided by the School’s [Essential Attributes and Abilities](#) and [NASW’s Code of Ethics](#).

Identification

Students must identify themselves as students or interns to clients and colleagues and should not convey that they are regular staff.

Confidentiality of Client and Agency Information

Students are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of client information, agency records and data, co-worker information, and for familiarizing themselves with agency policies regarding confidentiality, including relevant HIPAA regulations.

NASW Code of Ethics requirements regarding client information extend from internship to the classroom, seminars, student assignments, presentations, etc. Students are responsible for protecting client confidentiality in all instances where work with clients is presented outside of the agency. Client confidentiality is maintained by disguising names, dates, specific locations and geographic areas smaller than region (i.e. New England, Southeastern US) and other material which would identify a specific individual within a class of similar individuals. Confidentiality requires taking into consideration the community or audience with whom the material is to be shared; the material should be disguised accordingly.

No client files or agency records may be removed from the premises of the agency.

Process recordings are not considered a part of the official agency record but are maintained by a student for educational or professional purposes, such recordings are considered notes in extension of memory. When students maintain notes in extension of memory about clients, it is expected that those notes will be treated as confidential. With regard to all notes which are not considered part of the official agency record, prior to the termination of the internship, the student shall:

- Properly disguise all notes the student expects to take away from the agency to use for educational or other professional purposes; and
- Destroy the remainder, including electronically held information, in a manner which assures client confidentiality.

It is hoped that the agency will allow students to bring properly disguised process recordings back to Smith for use in papers and in the classroom. Proper disguise of clinical material should be discussed with the supervisor prior to submitting any written report or making any presentation. Upon graduation from Smith, all process materials generated in the program should be destroyed.

If any conflicts or uncertainties arise in applying these guidelines in accord with those of the agency, the intern shall inform both the supervisor and the PFA and then cooperate with them to resolve the difficulty.

Technology & Telehealth

The introduction of technology into social work practice has presented the opportunity for social workers and therefore, students, to practice using special apps, social media, portals for communication, and digital telehealth platforms like Zoom and Doxy to provide face to face services. This in turn has created challenges in jurisdictional regulation regarding confidentiality, risk, responsibility, and liability. Liability, ethics, and risk are the same when using telehealth as they are for in-person work. Just as in in-person clinical work, students are expected to abide by NASW standards including the protection of client private health information, respect for clients, client confidentiality, and professional practice ethics.

SSW Practicum has developed a foundational telehealth training required for all social work students. The course provides information on the practical applications of telehealth services in various clinical settings. It covers “best practices” in delivering telehealth to varying populations; guidelines on the ethical, safe and effective use of telehealth; and examples that illustrate the clinical aspects of telehealth services through videoconferencing, telephone triage, and online communication strategies to support, and counsel and educate clients. Also included are the experiences and lessons of clinicians currently providing telehealth to clients.

Students who will be practicing telehealth at their agencies are expected to participate in any additional required training in technology and telehealth practice and to follow protocols and regulations set forth in their placement agencies. In addition, students may be provided the use of agency owned technology, digital platforms, and equipment and must adhere to agency policies.

While a few placements may offer a combination of on site and telehealth options, most placements require students to be on site regardless of whether clinicians are using telehealth or not. The practicum team will defer to the placement agency regarding telehealth options. Students may not negotiate to work from home if it is not offered or allowed by the agency. There are a handful of placements that are fully remote. Those placements have requirements for candidates that students must meet.

Cell phone

For safety and ethical reasons, students should not use their personal cell phone for regular client communications. If students must use their cell phone to call a client, it is advisable to block your number (Dial *67 and then the number) or to create a unique Google phone number for use with clients. Students should refrain from personal cell phone usage during internship hours. Students must be aware that client phone numbers and names are protected health information. Students need to also be aware of agency protocol related to protected health information (PHI) and are encouraged to discuss HIPAA requirements with supervisors.

Social Media

Students are encouraged to update their privacy settings and refer to the ethical standards outlined in the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) regarding using professional discretion on social media. Social media postings should never directly or indirectly reference information or events related to clients, colleagues, or agencies. The School's *Using Social Media in Professional and Educational Endeavors* policy (1001.2) is [here](#).

Associated Costs

Students are responsible for all the costs associated with securing housing during their internships as well as commuting expenses, including parking and tolls. The Office of Practicum Learning works with students during placement matching to consider cost of living and commuting expenses when students make their geography selections. The Office of Practicum Learning does not provide funding to students during the internship year.

Offer of Employment at Host Agency During Internship

Students must report an offer of employment from their host agency to their Practicum Faculty Adviser (PFA) right away. The PFA and student will discuss the parameters of the offer to make sure that there aren't any conflicts of interest and to ensure students will continue to meet the program requirements for social work learning and graduation. Students must also complete an Employment Based Internship form. Students should send an email with the plan and role description to PFA and Associate Director/Practicum Director for confirmation.

Practicum Faculty Adviser

Every student is **assigned** a Practicum Faculty Adviser (PFA) who serves as an educational liaison between the School, student, and affiliated training agency. All PFAs are equipped and able to support all students. Practicum Faculty Advisers are either resident faculty or adjunct faculty advisers hired for the purpose of internship advising. Practicum Faculty Advisers are members and representatives of the Office of Practicum Learning.

PFA responsibilities:

- Provide educational instruction, mentoring, constructive feedback and grading, problem-solving, and advisory relationships
- Meet student in the summer
- Call student and supervisor in early September
- Provide written feedback on student [Monthly Narratives](#) (within 2 weeks)
- Provide written feedback and evaluation on internship assignments (2 weeks for all papers and 4 weeks for Major Case Study)
- Review student [process recording handbook](#) at various points during internship
- Visit students and supervisors 2x/internship in the fall and late winter/early spring

- Complete 2 evaluation reports of students' development (the Fall and Spring Visit Reports) to be shared with student and Office of Practicum Learning
- Call student in early January for mid-year check in
- Provide feedback regarding 2nd year internship planning for 1st year students
- Be available for problem-solving and check-ins with both student and agency

Practicum Director and Geographic Locations

If students need additional support during the practicum year, they may reach out to their practicum director or email the [Office of Practicum Learning \(OPL\)](#). The practicum directors each provide support to students based upon their internship site's geographic location. Students may confirm which practicum director to reach out to by viewing the [MSW Practicum website](#).

Student- Supervisor- PFA Site Visits

During the fall and spring visits, the PFA meets individually with each supervisor and each student, followed by a shared "three-way" meeting with supervisor and student to discuss the progression of the student's professional learning. It is expected that these visits will take a total of approximately three hours per student/supervisor pair. Purposes of the visit are to 1) assess that student and agency mutual expectations and obligations are being met, 2) to clarify learning goals, 3) to consult with both student and supervisor about the learning process, and 4) to help students think about future learning goals as emerging professional social workers. Students take an active role in creating the agenda for these meetings. At the completion of the two meetings, PFAs complete the PFA Visit Report which becomes part of the student's permanent record.

PFA completes and submits visit report  Student receives report

Practicum Seminar Instructor Role

The Practicum Seminar is taught by a member of the faculty. Depending on what issues may arise in the seminar, instructors will encourage students to take pertinent issues to their PFA and/or supervisor. Practicum seminar instructors do not provide clinical supervision or advising.

Sotomayor Fellows

Students are encouraged to reach out to a [Sotomayor fellow](#) for a confidential consultation about any questions, issues, or concerns regarding the navigation of any aspects of social identity and social oppression.

The Sotomayor Fellowship Program is an additional support to students and faculty advisers to explore and respond to how interpersonal and structural power and oppression manifest in agencies, in supervisory relationships, how they may impact the PFA-student relationship, and how they influence practicum seminar content and process.

Students, Practicum Faculty Advisers, and practicum seminar instructors are invited to utilize the fellows for confidential consultations throughout the internship year.

Agency Personnel Roles

Training Director

Many agencies designate a staff member as Training Director or Internship Coordinator. Training Directors play a key role in the design of the internship placement process, interviewing, onboarding, orientation, and ongoing communication between internship supervisors, students, and the School.

Supervisor

The internship supervisor is the primary instructor while the student is in the internship experience. The supervisor coordinates the student's overall experience, provides essential clinical and administrative teaching, supervision, mentoring, and evaluation. Practicum supervisors are experienced MSW clinicians (with a minimum of 2 years post-master's social work degree practice experience) and are employees of the agency. While the School provides malpractice liability insurance for each student, students practice under their supervisor's license.

Supervision and Evaluation

Students should receive a minimum of two hours of supervision/week. At least one of these hours must be individual supervision with the primary internship supervisor and incorporate the student's process recordings. The second hour can be with the primary supervisor, an adjunct supervisor, and/or group supervision. The weekly team meeting that includes administrative issues does not count as group supervision. Missed hours should, whenever possible, be rescheduled. While all primary supervisors must be social workers, the School welcomes adjunct supervisors from other allied disciplines.

Supervisors and/or agency designees are asked to provide an orientation for students at the beginning of the internship experience. This orientation should include necessary information regarding clinic organization, student responsibilities and safety protocols.

Students should attend staff meetings, training, rounds, and teaching seminars as required by the agency. Participation in staff committees and familiarity with agency administrative structure and procedures are valuable components of professional development and strongly encouraged.

A crucial aspect of becoming an independent social worker is the ability to receive and integrate feedback and evaluation in supervision. As adult learners, students are expected to engage as active participants in this process and to complete a self-evaluation which is used for the mid-year and final evaluations. While it is expected that evaluation is ongoing, supervisors complete 3 evaluative measures throughout the internship year: an Interim Progress Report in October, mid-year evaluation in December, and final evaluation at the end of the internship year. The evaluations are designed to facilitate a shared discussion between student and supervisor. The final

documents are signed by both student and supervisor and shared with the PFA and Practicum Learning Department.

We consider best practices for clinical supervision to include:

1. Creating and maintaining the learning environment
2. Relationally attuned approach (one size does not fit all)
3. Co-creating a Learning Plan
4. Clearly defined learning assignments and expectations
5. Providing direct practice opportunities to observe and be observed
6. Providing observationally- based feedback linking concepts to practice
7. Reflecting and helping students integrate feedback from evaluations

PRACTICUM CURRICULUM DESIGN AND COMPONENTS

Curriculum Design and Components

Under the School's Block Plan, three successive 10-week summer sessions are devoted exclusively to academic work, and the two intervening winter sessions are reserved for the internship. The Block Plan exposes students to the realities of agency life and permits them to immerse themselves in their internship. Students can experience a range of social work approaches and practice a broad spectrum of roles and skills. Although internships may vary in focus, it is expected that students will gain experience working with a mixture of individual clients, groups, couples, families, and other multi-person modalities over the course of their two internships.

Caseload size is also an important factor in providing optimal learning for students. The School expects that students have a minimum of 48-60 direct service contact hours per month. Because the nature of the work in each agency differs, there will be some variation in the caseload assigned.

First Year Practicum

All first year internships allow students to practice general social work practice skills and include the opportunity to practice the School's specialty of clinical social work, with a strong emphasis on direct contact with clients.

The first year is designed to introduce students to a range of practice behaviors (engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation) and clinical case management across work with individuals, families, groups, and communities so that students can learn and demonstrate first year practicum learning objectives and competencies.

First year internship components include:

- 30 hours/week at agency site, including lunch and short daily breaks (recommended 30 minutes), at a minimum of 4 days/ week, for a total of 960 hours in agency from roughly start of September-end of April
Breakdown of 30 hrs/week:

- ❖ 12-15 hours/week in direct service provision (individual, couples, families, group, milieu)
- ❖ Minimum of 2 hrs/week supervision (1 hour must be individual and provided by an MSW with 2+ years of post graduation experience)
- ❖ Required agency documentation
- ❖ Collateral work on behalf of clients
- ❖ Agency meetings, rounds, trainings
- ❖ Agency committee work, advocacy, evaluation
- ❖ [Learning Plan](#)
- ❖ Self-evaluation on [mid-year](#) and [final](#) internship evaluations
- ❖ If all agency work is complete and time permits, students may work on process recordings from the [process recording handbook](#) and clinical reading

In addition:

- Monthly practicum seminar (10 two hr evening classes outside of agency hours)
- One process recordings/week to internship supervisor
- Practicum Assignments to PFA
 - [Monthly narratives](#) (one/month at internship)
 - Structural assessment paper, "[Understanding Your Agency](#)"
 - [Major Case Study](#)
- End of internship year feedback forms

Second Year & Advanced Standing Practicum Requirements

The second year is focused on the acquisition and deepening of the knowledge and skills in clinical practice at an advanced level. The specialization year enables students to integrate skills in greater depth and with greater focus in preparation for increasingly autonomous practice.

Second year students are expected to show greater ability to choose between different approaches to practice with particular clients and to defend their choice of intervention than are first year students. Students engage in advanced clinical interviewing, assessment, clinical case management, and psychotherapy.

Second year practicum components include:

- 30 hours/week of internship, including short daily breaks and lunch (recommended 30 minutes), at a minimum of 4 days/week, for a total of 960 hours in agency site from roughly start of September-end of April

Breakdown of 30 hours:

 - ❖ 12-15 hours/week in direct service provision (individual, couples, families, group, milieu)
 - ❖ Minimum of 2 hrs/week supervision (1 hour must be individual and provided by experienced MSW)
 - ❖ Agency documentation
 - ❖ Collateral work on behalf of clients

- ❖ Agency meetings, rounds, trainings
- ❖ Agency committee work, advocacy, evaluation
- ❖ [Learning Plan](#)
- ❖ Self-evaluation on [mid-year](#) and [final](#) internship evaluations
- ❖ If all agency work is complete and time permits, students may work on process recordings from the [process recording handbook](#) and clinical reading

In addition:

- Monthly practicum seminar (10 two hr evening classes outside of agency hours)
- One or more process recordings/ week to internship supervisor
- Practicum Assignments to PFA (50% of practicum course grade)
 - [Monthly narratives](#) (one/month at internship)
 - [Clinical Issue Paper](#)
 - [Major Case Study](#)
- End of internship year feedback forms

Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) - Accommodations for Practicum Year

What is the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC)?

The [Accessibility Resource Center \(ARC\)](#) facilitates the provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodations and services to individual students with documented disabilities. ARC has a critical lens regarding the ways systemic environments (cultural/physical/structural) create barriers for some bodies /minds more than others. ARC holds a non-pathologizing disability justice perspective that the "functional limitations" belong to the structures and not to individuals.

Smith College is both philosophically committed and legally required to assure equal access for students with documented disabilities to participate in all college programs.

How to access accommodations?

A student may voluntarily register with ARC by completing a disability identification form and providing documentation of a disability. Students can start a conversation with ARC to explore accommodations without documentation of a disability. Accommodations and services will be discussed through an interactive process with a representative from the ARC office. Relevant medical and educational information will be reviewed and a final plan for accommodations will be approved by the college.

What happens after receiving accommodations?

Directors of Practicum Learning reach out by email to student to schedule a 15-30 minute meeting that will include the student, Practicum Faculty Adviser (PFA), and designated Director, to discuss how accommodations can be applied in the placement setting, and how to communicate with the agency clinical supervisor about learning needs and accommodations. After this meeting, the designated Director will briefly

document the meeting in an email to the student summarizing the meeting and offering further support should it be needed.

If a student would benefit from accommodations to support their academic learning and practicum placement, then they are recommended to connect with ARC to identify their needs and available options for academic support. To get connected to the Accessibility Resource Center and [access their forms please click here](#). You may also contact ARC at arc@smith.edu.

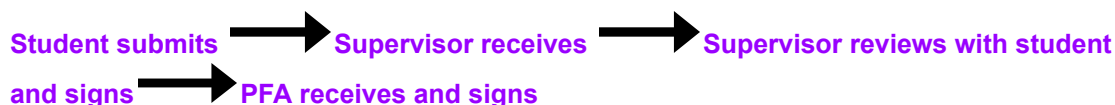
Practicum Requirements for All Students:

Ongoing Reading

Students are expected to engage in ongoing clinical reading to deepen their clinical skills. Students will be completing required reading for their practicum seminars. In addition, supervisors and PFAs may suggest readings relevant to the student's progress and integrate those materials into their meetings.

The Learning Plan (student completes in Sonia; supervisor gives feedback; student, supervisor, PFA all sign; 10 points)

All first and second year students are asked to draw from SSW's defined learning objectives (pg. 3-4) to develop a learning plan in collaboration with their supervisors during the first weeks of the internship. This learning plan creates a structure for the internship and should be reviewed on an ongoing basis with the supervisor and PFA. A blank 1st year learning plan can be viewed [here](#). The 2nd year learning plan can be viewed [here](#).



Process Recordings (Due weekly to supervisor; number of completed process recordings are tracked in mid-year and final internship evals)

The School requires that all students learn to do process recordings of client interviews. A process recording is the written description of the interaction between client and worker. It contains the student's best verbatim recollection of the content of the interaction, the worker's own observations, reactions and questions, and allows for detailed response and feedback from the clinical supervisor. Formats vary and students should consult with supervisors about the most appropriate format given the particular setting and learning needs. The use of video equipment and one-way mirrors, via agency protocol and informed consent, as part of the supervisory process is also encouraged.

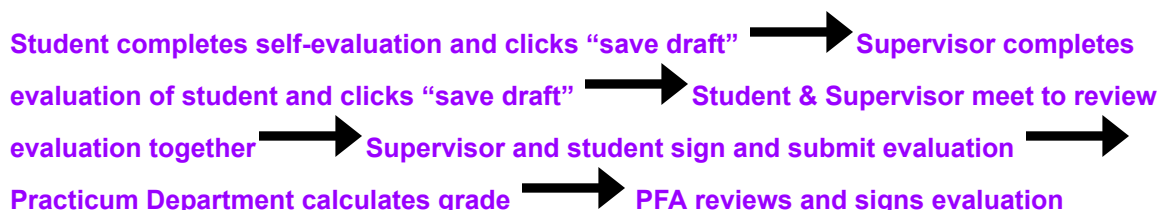
The School expects students to do a minimum of one process recording per week which is submitted to the supervisor for written feedback and then returned to the student for discussion. While the School recognizes that these are time consuming for both

students and supervisors, we affirm their value in terms of helping students remember and reflect upon their work and allowing for detailed review and feedback on the student's clinical interactions with clients. If students' work is complete at internship placement and they have additional time, they can work on the process recordings while at placement.

Students should keep the recordings in a confidential location and protected location. Process recordings should be shared with the PFA before the site visit (at least 3) and, with careful disguising of identifying information, for the major case study and summer classroom assignments. The process recording handbook can be found [here](#).

Self-evaluations on Mid-year and Final Practicum Evaluations (student completes in Sonia; supervisor completes in Sonia; student, supervisor and PFA sign; 15 points for mid-year eval and 25 points for final eval)

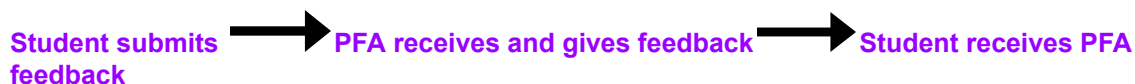
Students complete their own self-evaluations as part of both the mid-year and final internship evaluation process. The self-evaluation is shared with the student's supervisor and is used to further dialogue and feedback between student and supervisor. The completed evaluations are shared with the student's PFA and Practicum Directors. The first year mid and final evaluation can be viewed [here](#) and [here](#). The second year mid and final evaluation can be viewed [here](#) and [here](#).



Practicum Assignments submitted in Sonia:

Monthly Narrative Report (8 reports; total of 12 points)

The monthly narrative is the primary way students reflect on their previous month of practicum / internship learning and share their experiences with their PFA. Discussion of the monthly narratives is an important part of the PFA agency visits. The first narrative is due October 1st with the final of the 8 reports due on May 1st. The reports are not shared with supervisors. A sample of the monthly narrative can be viewed [here](#).



Clinical Issue Paper (Second Year Students Only; 13 points)

The clinical issue paper focuses on a clinical issue the student has been grappling with in their internship. A detailed description of the assignment and grading rubric can be viewed [here](#).



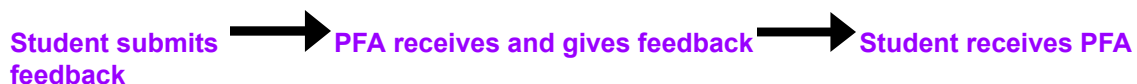
Understanding Your Agency (First Year Students Only; 13 points)

The Understanding Your Agency paper (4-5 double spaced typed pages) utilizes a structural analysis model to identify and understand: 1) the agency structure and context in which clients receive services; 2) the relationship between client needs and agency goals, structure and the delivery of services; 3) and assess agency policies and/or practices as they relate to issues of racism and anti-racism work. A detailed description of the assignment and grading rubric can be viewed [here](#).



Major Case Study (25 points)

The Major Case Study is designed to provide an in-depth opportunity to reflect on and conceptualize clinical work, with particular attention to theory, assessment, intervention and evaluation of practice. Students may choose to write their case on an individual, family, or group. Students elevate their work with process recordings throughout their papers and utilize them in their summer Practice and elective courses. A detailed description of the first year assignment and grading rubric can be viewed [here](#). The second year assignment and rubric can also be viewed [here](#).



Grading

The Practicum Learning in Social Work courses (SOCW 580 and 680) are graded on a Pass/Marginal Pass/Fail basis. Credit is granted only if the entire course is completed satisfactorily. No partial credit is granted. The grade for the course is assigned by the Director of Practicum Learning and is based upon the written evaluations submitted by the internship supervisor as well as feedback from the PFA, obtained from rubric-based evaluations of demonstrated competencies on assignments and in the internship experience internship.

Sonia Practicum Database

All students, supervisors, and PFAs will use the Sonia database for all internship assignments, evaluations, reports, and overall grading. Students will also use Sonia to assist them in the 2nd year internship placement process. The Sonia Student Guide can be viewed [here](#).

**Practicum Learning in Social Work
Course Grading Rubric**

FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

Internship 50% of final grade		Practicum Assignments 50% of final grade	
Student Learning Plan	10	Monthly Narratives	
		7-8 completed	12
		5-6 completed	9
		3-4 completed	6
		1-2 completed	3
Mid-year Internship Evaluation	15	Understanding your Agency Paper (separate assignment & rubric)	13
Final Internship Evaluation	25	Major Case Study (separate assignment & rubric)	25
Points	50	Points	50
Total Points		100	

Grade (check one) **P (83- 100)** _____ **MP (82-75)** _____ **F (< 74)** _____
 Numerical value based on %: (83-100%) (82%-75%) (<74%)

**Practicum Learning in Social Work
Course Grading Rubric**

SECOND YEAR STUDENTS

Internship 50% of final grade		Practicum Assignments 50% of final grade	
Student Learning Plan	10	Monthly Narratives 7-8 completed 12 5-6 completed 9 3-4 completed 6 1-2 completed 3	
Mid-year Internship Evaluation	15	Clinical Issues Paper (separate assignment & rubric)	13
Final Internship Evaluation	25	Major Case Study (separate assignment & rubric)	25
Points	50	Points	50
Total Points		100	

Grade (check one) **P (83- 100)** _____ **MP (82-75)** _____ **F (< 74)** _____
 Numerical value based on %: (83-100%) (-82%-75%) (<74%)

Grading Policy

Students are expected to complete assignments by the assigned due date in the practicum learning guide (pg. 22) and on the [calendar of assignments](#). If a student is unable to complete an assignment by the due date, **they are required to reach out to their practicum faculty advisor to discuss a plan for completing the assignment with an alternative due date**. If a due date is changed in coordination with the PFA, the new agreed upon due date must take into consideration that the PFA will need to provide feedback to the student on the document.

For student learners who do better with planning ahead, deadlines should be discussed during the first meeting between the student and their PFA.

Final Fall Deadline: The final deadline to submit fall assignments* in Sonia is **December 19, 2025 at 11:59pm Eastern Time**. Assignments **will not** be accepted after this date/time and **will not** receive credit.

Final Spring Deadline: The final deadline to submit spring assignments** in Sonia is **April 15, 2026 at 11:59pm Eastern Time**. Assignments **will not** be accepted after this date/time and **will not** receive credit.

Students with or without an ARC accommodation may receive extensions to the alternative due dates established with their PFA if needed. There will be no extensions granted for any student beyond the end of fall (December 19th) or end of spring (April 15th) deadlines.

Guided by radical grace principles, this grading policy was developed to provide structure and support to different learners in the spirit of a universalist approach. For this policy to be effective, students must be engaged in direct communication with PFAs about their plan to complete assignments.

*Fall assignments include:

- Sept - Nov Monthly Narratives
- Understanding Your Agency (1st year) or Clinical Issues Paper (2nd year)

**Spring assignments include:

- Dec - April Monthly Narratives
- Major Case Study (1st and 2nd year)

**In the event of extenuating circumstances, the Directors of Practicum Learning in collaboration with the student and the PFA will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Students must stay in communication with their PFAs.*

Practicum Seminars:

First Year Practicum Seminar

This required course (SOCW 581) is designed to help students successfully enter into and engage in the learning of the first year of internship. The seminar is designed to support students in achieving the defined learning objectives for the first year of internship and to deepen their understanding and integration of content from the summer coursework. Students are expected to use the seminar as a forum to discuss their own clinical work and to actively engage in the integration of theory and practice relevant to their own internship setting.

The course is taught by a faculty adviser and meets for 10 sessions (one evening for 2 hrs/month; meets twice in October and January) in virtual classrooms. The syllabi are found in the Moodle page for the course.

The first year practicum seminar objectives include:

1. Develop a deeper sense of themselves as emerging professionals and be able to enact key dimensions of the professional role within the context of their specific internship settings.
2. Grow in their understanding of and ability to make use of supervision as a critical forum for clinical learning and development.
3. Increase their understanding and use of the practicum faculty advisor as they navigate the integration of classroom, personal and internship based learning.
4. Have the opportunity to continue to develop and practice professional communication and problem-solving skills.
5. Draw upon content from the summer course work to help deepen their capacity to assess clients' needs as well as strengths and to develop appropriate interventions based upon those assessments.
6. Explore the complexities of the therapeutic relationship, with attention to use of self within the working alliance, transference and countertransference, boundaries and self-disclosure.
7. Reflect on issues of multiple social identities, racism, oppression, power and privilege as they relate to their work with clients and within the agency setting.
8. Review the NASW Code of Ethics as it applies to their particular practice settings and dilemmas they may encounter in the course of their work.
9. Understand more fully the professional, personal and administrative complexities of the termination process.
10. Have the opportunity to discuss and prepare for the major internship assignments that are due during the internship year.

Second Year/Advanced Standing Practicum Seminars

This required course (SOCW 681) is designed to support second year students' academic learning process during their internships. The goal is to foster students' abilities to successfully engage with and integrate multiple conceptual frameworks into direct clinical practice. The seminar will revisit summer course content to provide further continuity and integration during the second year internship. Students will present their own clinical work and critically examine the treatment process including: systemic and structural dynamics in which the therapeutic relationship unfolds, internal transference and countertransference dynamics, and meaning making processes that inform treatment formulations, interventions, and evaluation.

The course is taught by faculty advisers and meets for 10 sessions (one evening for 2 hrs/month; meets twice monthly in October and January) in virtual classrooms. The syllabi are found in the Moodle page for the course.

The second year and Advanced Standing practicum seminar course objectives include:

1. Build upon and integrate summer course work into direct clinical practice.
2. Continue to develop and practice case presentation and consultation skills.
3. Expand their capacity to conduct comprehensive biopsychosocial assessments and clinical formulations. Students will enhance their ability to translate conceptual assessments and formulations to direct clinical practice.
4. Explore the therapeutic working alliance, transference and countertransference dynamics, use of self, including themes related to self-disclosure and boundaries.
5. Review the NASW Code of Ethics and its implications for social work professionals working in specific settings.
6. Understand more fully the professional, personal and administrative complexities of working in agency-based practice.
7. Have the opportunity to discuss and prepare for the major internship assignments that are due during the second internship year.

INFORMATION RELATED TO INTERNSHIP AGENCIES

Including calendar, schedule, and how to address conflict

CALENDAR / SCHEDULE

The MSW Practicum Calendar is [available on the SSW website](#). Students typically begin their internship the Tuesday after Labor Day, though some agencies require an earlier start for training and orientation. Internships end approximately 34 weeks later, the last Friday of the last full week in April, though some agencies require a later ending. The Practicum Learning team makes every effort to inform students at the time of matching if the agency has an alternative schedule and also requests that agencies inform students of their calendar during the interview process.

Students are at their agencies 30 hours/week, including short breaks and lunch (recommended at least 30 minutes) determined by the agency, typically 4 days/week between Monday-Friday. Commuting time is NOT included in part of the 30 hours. Some agencies may require a 5 day/week schedule, in which case the Practicum Dept. makes every effort to inform students of this at the time of matching. Each agency determines their own schedule and scheduled days do not have to be consecutive. The specific 30 hours worked will be negotiated between the agency and the student with the expectation that the needs of the agency take precedence.

Students may be required to be present at their internship during evening hours. Many settings, especially outpatient clinics, utilize evening hours to see clients. Students should not see clients if there are no other staff present in the agency. Agencies are requested to review the internship schedule at the time of interview.

Students are not responsible for client care on their scheduled days off and appropriate coverage must be discussed with their supervisor and provided by the agency.

Students with particular scheduling needs (e.g. no evening hours, need internship hours outside of a M-F schedule) must inform the Practicum Learning Department at the time of completing their Internship Planning form.

Please note that many agencies, in particular schools and college mental health centers, request early start dates and late end dates due to additional time off during the internship period (eg. spring break, February vacation week, misc. Professional Education days).

Attendance Policy

In an effort to be aligned with our core principles and social work code of ethics, The Office of Practicum Learning, has designed the attendance policy to be inclusive of religious observances and to create flexibility where possible and equitability across various student placements and settings.

Students may take up to 60 hrs off from the internship for any reason, including medical appointments and important self-care needed by students. These 8 days/60 hrs do not need to be made up.

- Students must notify clinical supervisor and practicum faculty advisor (with as much notice as possible)
- Students must follow their agency's protocol regarding reporting their absence in advance of their scheduled time in and ensure that their duties are covered.
- Any absences beyond 8 days/60hrs must be made up. Students must collaborate with their supervisor, PFA, and the Practicum Learning Director to develop a make up plan.
- The 60 hours are not intended to be taken consecutively or intended to be "saved" or "banked" as time off. (e.g. two weeks in a row away from placement)

Students who experience unexpected health or major life events and who do not choose to take a Leave of Absence, must meet the time requirement to pass Internship. The Office of Practicum Learning will make every effort, in conjunction with the student's PFA, agency supervisor, and Associate Dean, to identify an alternative plan, whenever possible.

Religious observances:

Student members of any religious group may take time off during the practicum year when required in compliance with their religious obligations. If they choose to do this, it is important that they notify their agency supervisor and their practicum faculty adviser in advance of religious holidays or observances. Religious holidays can be observed without using the 8 days/60hrs.

Holidays

Days off are listed on [the SSW website](#). If a student wishes to take some part of winter vacation at another time, the student may do so with permission from their supervisor and only in circumstances that do not conflict with agency practice needs. Any such change in vacation time must also be shared with the PFA.

Jury Duty

If students are required to attend Jury Duty, they can take those days without penalty and without using the 8 day/60 hours.

Agency closures

Students are permitted to take holidays when the agency is closed without making those days up. The exception to this is when students are placed in agencies, often schools and college counseling health centers, that have additional weeks off during the internship year, hence the early start date and/or late end of the internship that will have been arranged in advance.

Students also do not need to make up days due to agency closures due to inclement weather. However, if an agency stays open during a storm and the student calls out, they must count that day off as one of their absences.

In the event that an agency is undergoing a labor-management dispute, such as a strike, student attendance at their agency may not be possible. Students should consult with their agency supervisors, PFA, and the Office of Practicum Learning immediately regarding a plan to make up any missed days. If a labor dispute continues for a protracted period of time, the School reserves the right to re-place the student, so that the student may complete their internship in time.

Conferences and SSW Committee Days

Students may take up to three days during the internship year for attendance at conferences (at student or agency's expense) and/or SSW supported events like MA Social Work Advocacy Day in Boston. Students must plan for any educational absence in advance, giving the agency reasonable notice and receiving approval from the primary supervisor.

Problem Solving and Conflict

During the internship period it is expected that the majority of issues impacting student learning will be addressed through supervision and faculty advising. Per the [Master's Program Handbook](#), "Students, faculty, and/or administrators are encouraged to address student learning needs and issues through the process of advising to address these issues as they emerge. The key outcome of this process is to identify support for students to help them resolve challenges and to support them in their learning."

Discrimination while in Practicum

Discriminatory harassment is unwelcome verbal, written or physical conduct based on a person's actual or perceived race, color or national origin or other protected category that substantially or unreasonably interferes with or adversely affects the targeted individual's or others' learning opportunities; or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. Smith College School for Social Work is committed to facilitating a Practicum Learning experience that is free from discrimination based on any characteristic protected by law. This includes discrimination on the basis of age, race, color, national origin/ancestry, religion, sex or gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, genetic information, or veteran status/membership in the uniformed services. Issues related to structural oppression, microaggressions, ableism, trans or homophobia, racism, or any other type of discrimination should be taken seriously and could warrant the need to remove a student from a placement.

These situations can be complicated and have potential legal implications, students must carefully follow the procedures outlined below and should not attempt to resolve such situations without support.

Smith SSW follows the [Smith College Discriminatory Harassment Policy](#). It is critical that if a student is experiencing discrimination in the internship, they raise concerns with the agency supervisor if at all possible, as there may be steps that must be taken in the agency. The PFA must also be notified. The PFA in collaboration with the Office of Practicum Learning, as required in all discrimination situations, will notify the Title IX Officer for advice and guidance. The Title IX Officer will reach out to the student to discuss supports.

If, after efforts are made, the issues are not resolvable, the adviser and student will work with a director in the Office of Practicum Learning to determine next steps up to and

including reassignment. Students may not end a placement without communication with the Office of Practicum Learning.

Internship-related Conflicts

Although every effort is made to ensure a successful internship experience, unforeseen circumstances, such as a loss of a supervisor or closure of an agency, may result in the need to replace a student. If this occurs, the student must contact their PFA immediately, who will then contact the Associate Director/Practicum Director. Students need not and should not attempt to resolve the situation on their own.

If a student requests a new internship during the internship year, a thorough understanding of the circumstances will be explored with the agency, PFA and Associate Director/Practicum Director. A change of internship is considered the option of last resort. If significant structural issues and/or irresolvable conflicts are present, a change in internship may be effected at the discretion of the Practicum Director taking into account the availability of agency sites. Changes will be initiated by the Office of Practicum Learning and must be acquired through the School's placement process. Placements cannot be developed by students independently of the Office of Practicum Learning and the School. Failure to adhere to this process may result in lost internship time for the student that will need to be made up.

Any conflict should first be addressed through the [following pathways](#), beginning with the person the student should turn to for assistance first, then second if it is not resolved, and so on:

1. Supervisor
2. Practicum Faculty Adviser
3. Associate Director / Director of Practicum Learning
4. Associate Dean of Academic Affairs

Formal Problem Solving Process

If issues arise that cannot be resolved through problem-solving with the agency and through advising, including a student being terminated from their agency, the student will be required to meet with the supervisor, PFA, and a Practicum Director to engage in the next step of the School's problem solving procedures: the [Academic Progress Review process](#). The first step of the formal problem solving process is the Academic Conference. The second step is the Academic Review.

INTERNSHIP PLACEMENT PROCESS OVERVIEW

Agencies

SSW's nationally recognized internship program has affiliates throughout the U.S., including 20 states and DC. SSW partners with agencies that provide the highest quality training possible consistent with the mission of social work, CSWE accreditation guidelines, and our School. To that end, the Practicum Learning Dept. initiates communication with agencies of interest, responds to requests for affiliation, evaluates potential agencies through an application process, meetings with the internship directors, and culminates with both institutions signing a legal affiliation agreement.

At a minimum, agencies are selected based on their commitment to professional social work training; ability to provide 2 hours/week of supervision; and commitment to anti-racism. Agencies must have qualified clinical supervisors (with a minimum of 2 years post-master's social work degree practice experience), be willing and able to provide students with observationally-based feedback on the internship competencies, complete student evaluation measures, participate in fall and spring meetings with the PFA, and provide a place where students are supported in grappling with challenging clinical and sociocultural issues. Midyear and end-of-year feedback by students and PFAs is used for purposes of quality assurance and improvement.

The School is responsible for finding, evaluating, and monitoring agency placements. Students may suggest potential placement sites to the Practicum Learning Dept.; however, only the Practicum Directors or Associate Director can make the final determination about whether the agency meets the School's criteria and then negotiate a formal legal agreement with the site. **Students may not initiate contact with agencies to seek out internships or negotiate placements on their own without the expressed collaboration of the internship directors.** This policy is to ensure equity among students' access to agencies and overall integrity of the internship program.

First Year Matching Process

First year internships are assigned to provide students a strong foundation for clinical social work practice. The first year of internship is considered generalist practice by CSWE and often takes place in school-based settings, hospitals, and community-based mental health programs that offer clinical case management along with other services.

Incoming students complete an Internship Planning Form at the time of application and are encouraged to share their educational interests and personal circumstances so that the Practicum Placement Committee (PPC), comprised of the practicum learning directors, support staff, and other members of Practicum Learning Team including PFAs, can make the best match possible. The PPC **assigns** students to agencies in order to provide learning experiences that build upon students' skills and strengths. Students

may be placed in a setting and/or with a population that is new to them and offers different experiences and exposure. These decisions are made using information from application materials including the Internship Planning Form about their preferences and personal considerations. Students are not guaranteed their first geographical choice; however the PPC is generally able to place most early admission students in their first choice region.

Five College Circle of Scholars and Early Decision applicants receive their geography assignments at the time they are notified of their acceptance. Students receive notifications of their specific agency assignments beginning in late March-April, after their resumes have been reviewed by prospective agencies. Regular admission students generally will receive their specific agency assignment in April-May. A small number of students may still be in the placement process into the summer.

Incoming transfer and Advanced Standing status students also follow this protocol and complete an additional section of the internship placement form that is specific to 2nd year of internship.

Students should contact the Office of Practicum Learning as soon as possible if they have questions about their agency assignment. **Students must disclose any criminal convictions or past positive CORIs that might compromise their ability to be accepted for an internship, or eventually be employed and/or licensed as a social worker, to the Office of Practicum Learning on their Internship Planning Form. Students should also disclose if they have not been vaccinated, as some agencies don't accept vaccination waivers.** Disclosure doesn't mean that a student can't be placed; however, depending on the circumstances, certain internships may not be available. The Practicum Learning team is successful at placing students with prior convictions. The key is to communicate this early so that a plan can be created for both the student and agency.

Second Year Matching Process

Second year of internship provides students with an opportunity to deepen their clinical skills and to develop an area of specialization within the internship experience. The majority of second year students complete their internships in community mental health centers/outpatient clinic settings, VA hospitals, and college mental health centers.

In December through early January, current and prospective agencies confirm their available training slots for the following placement year and information about the agency, training opportunities, and requirements are carefully reviewed by the Practicum Learning Department. This information is available through our password-protected, web-based internship site Sonia database.

Rising second year students receive communication from the Practicum Office in late fall about early application deadlines, interview timelines and new second year internship initiatives in mid-December. Students are encouraged to explore potential

agencies in Sonia prior to completing their Second Year Internship Form. This form is more detailed than the first year form: students rank their top geographical regions and also clinical setting and population preferences. Students provide a narrative description of their first year internship experience to date to help focus on what is most important for their second year internship learning. Students also submit an updated resume highlighting their first year internship.

Rising second year students discuss their second year internship interests and questions with their PFAs in mid-December- early January. PFAs then submit a summary of this meeting with their recommendations to the Practicum Placement Committee (PPC), composed of the practicum learning directors, support staff, and other members of Practicum Learning Team including PFAs, that will be used as part of the matching process.

All rising second year students are strongly encouraged to schedule a pre-placement meeting with the Practicum Directors in early January to share information about learning preferences, gain information about agencies, and/or have more time to think through learning and/or living needs. These meetings are 15-20 minutes in length; signup instructions are included with the placement materials.

Once again, students must disclose any criminal convictions or past positive CORI that might compromise their ability to be accepted for internship, or eventually be employed and/or licensed as a social worker to the Practicum Learning Department on their Internship Planning Form. Students should also disclose if they have not been vaccinated, as some agencies don't accept vaccination waivers. Disclosure doesn't mean that a student can't be placed. However, depending on the circumstances, certain internships may not be available. The Practicum Learning Dept. is successful at placing students with prior convictions. The key is to communicate this early so that a plan can be created for both the student and agency.

The PPC meets to make initial student-agency matches in the third week of January. All agency data, Second Year Internship Forms, updated student resumes, and PFA Recommendation Forms will have been submitted and reviewed. Student mid-year evaluations and PFA Fall Visit Reports will also be reviewed to help the PPC make thoughtful matches.

Students are strongly encouraged to be up to date on all of their internship assignments and monthly narratives prior to the January matching process as this factor will be taken into consideration by the PPC. Many competitive agencies require students to be caught up on all of their internship assignments with passing scores.

All rising second years will be matched at the same time, organized by their first choice geographical regions. The PPC starts matching all students by agency interview timeline and timelines for interview differ from state to state and agency to agency. Once

students are matched, students' resumes are sent to the agency for review. After the resume is reviewed in accordance with the agency's interview timeline, students will be notified of their tentative assignment, complete any application materials, and prepare for the interview. Depending on the agency, this process can take several weeks.

Typically, 95% of second year students received their first choice geographical area. An additional 5% received their second choice, with the majority of those students in New England states where they could remain living in their home communities but crossed a state line for their internship.

Students should contact the Office of Practicum Learning as soon as possible if they have questions about their agency assignment.

Interviewing and Onboarding

All students interview as part of the placement confirmation process. The intent of the interview is to explore the fit between the student and the internship's learning opportunities and requirements. Developing successful interviewing skills is an important part of professional development. Students should confirm whether the interview is in-person or via Zoom.

All students should carefully review the [interview preparation materials](#) found in Sonia (second year students) or emailed as an attachment with your agency notification (incoming students).

Students must complete all of the agency's onboarding requirements before they can be cleared to begin their internship. Onboarding requirements may include background checks, fingerprinting (CORI), drug testing, physical examination, tuberculosis screening, immunization verification, First Aid/CPR certification, and/or references. Information obtained through background checks may include registered home address, driving status, aliases, criminal history, drug status including drug possession arrests, and any personal protection orders held against the student.

Many agencies, including training hospitals, require that students have up-to-date vaccinations and don't accept vaccination waivers. **If you have not received vaccinations, please share this information with the Office of Practicum Learning on the Internship Planning Form.**

Agencies with onboarding requirements are asked to notify Practicum Learning at the time placement assignments are made, and to review all onboarding requirements with students at the time of interview or directly after acceptance. The Practicum Learning team is available to assist students with information regarding background checks, but it is the student's responsibility to complete and submit required materials to the agency.

The school reimburses students for the cost of background (CORI) checks, if the agency does not cover it. Students requesting reimbursement should retain an *original* receipt for these expenses and contact the Practicum Learning team for directions about how to submit their request.

Vehicle Use for Agency Business

Agencies may at times or as part of the day-to-day functioning, require or request that student interns use vehicles in the performance of their internship activities, which may include transporting clients. This may involve student interns driving their own vehicles or agency vehicles, or student interns as passengers in an agency vehicle or vehicle owned by an agency staff member. The use of a vehicle for purposes of carrying out internship activities is acceptable, provided that adequate safety guidelines and protocols are in place at the agency to identify and manage potential risks. Agency policy and procedure for vehicle use for staff, volunteers, and interns outlining agency and student responsibilities should also be in place. Some agencies require students to obtain a special rider in their own insurance policy to cover any passengers. The agency should cover this rider. However the school will reimburse the cost of this rider if the agency does not. If there are questions regarding vehicle use please contact the [Office of Practicum Learning](#) for clarification.

First Year Interviews

First year interviews are designed to confirm fit between the agency and student learner. The agency should provide an overview of the internship, types of learning assignments, supervisory plan, and typical caseload. Any specific logistical requirements that affect the SSW calendar should be discussed, including training orientation dates and early starts/ late endings, which are typical in school-based and some other placements. Additional pertinent information including onboarding requirements, dress code, parking information, etc. should be reviewed.

Agencies are informed that they are interviewing first year students prior to the start of their graduate education and they will be aware that students haven't started classes yet. Nevertheless, students need to be prepared to talk about their relevant professional work and volunteer experiences and why they are pursuing a graduate degree in social work . Successful interviewees are able to demonstrate good communication skills, enthusiasm about learning, openness to new experiences, ability to be a team player, and maturity.

When communicating directly with the agency to schedule the interview: 1) make oneself available, 2) respond promptly (within 24-48 hrs) to all communications **using your SSW email account**, and 3) arrive on time for the actual interview.

Students must also complete an Interview Tracking Form which is reviewed by the Practicum Learning Dept. If there are concerns regarding the interview process, students are to contact the Office of Practicum Learning right away.

Failure to accept an internship offer or to obtain an offer after three placement attempts requires a meeting with one of the Practicum Directors and possibly the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs to explore the circumstances and internship readiness at that time.

Second Year Interviews

For the second year of internship, agencies interview many students from various MSW programs for the same training slots and select their top candidates. We refer to this as competitive interviewing versus confirming interviewing. While agencies may have agreed to take a Smith student, they reserve the right to accept another student from another school if that student presents as more qualified.

The Office of Practicum Learning asks agencies to describe their interviewing process and we then share this with students in advance of the interview. During pre-placement meetings, we review together how competitive a particular agency may be and weigh the pros and cons of moving forward. Under no circumstances does the Office of Practicum Learning knowingly have Smith students compete against one another for the same training slot.

In addition to competitive interviews, some agencies require more than one interview, conduct group interviews, and/or utilize interviewing panels. Students are often asked to present a case, answer questions from a provided sample vignette, or provide an on-the-spot clinical documentation sample. Agency requirements change frequently so we may not know how the interview process will unfold.

In general, specialized hospital placements may require previous relevant experience, specialized child and family programs may require previous child experience, etc. College counseling centers usually require that students have a minimum of five years of relevant work experience since graduating from college. College counseling centers are often unable to accept interns who were undergraduate students at the same institution.

Second year students are notified via email of their agency assignment, application process, and interview process on a rolling basis based on the agencies' interview schedule. Students begin interviewing as early as late January through the end of March.

When communicating directly with the agency to schedule the interview, 1) make yourself available, 2) respond promptly (within 24-48 hrs) to all communications using your SSW email address, and 3) arrive on time for the actual interview.

Students must also complete an Interview Tracking Form which is reviewed by the Practicum Learning team. If there are concerns regarding the interview process, students are to contact the Practicum Learning team. right away.

Failure to accept an internship or obtain an offer after three placement attempts requires a meeting with one of the Practicum Directors and possibly the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs to explore the circumstances and internship readiness at that time.

Employment-based Internships (EBI)

Students may apply to have one of their internships in their place of social service agency employment. Prospective EBI agencies must meet the School's affiliation criteria and be able to have the student engage in substantial new learning opportunities. A complete description of the EBI program can be found [here](#) (scroll down).

Incoming students must submit their complete EBI application by the Admissions Dept. regular application deadline. Rising second year students must submit their EBI application with their second year internship form on the January due date.

After reviewing the completed application, the EBI Coordinator or Practicum Director will confer with the prospective agency supervisor and/or director of training to ensure that all EBI requirements can be met. EBI agencies must be able to delineate between the student internship role / hours, and paid employee role / hours. The EBI Coordinator will ask whether the host agency plans on financially compensating the student for their internship hours. **Please note the decision to provide compensation resides with the agency and some students in EBIs may only be paid for those hours worked in addition to the 30 weekly unpaid internship hours.**

Strategies are offered to the agency to protect the student's learning and to separate out educational goals from employer goals. Lastly, the EBI Coordinator speaks with the student to discuss the pros and cons of moving forward with the EBI internship before finalizing the plan.

Students must understand that sometimes employment based internship placements can be complicated. If a student ceases to be employed by the agency for any reason (including termination or resignation), their internship may also be at risk. Depending on the timing and nature of the separation, the Practicum team may not be able to re-place a student at another agency during that current internship cycle. In that case, the student would either be required to have an academic conference meeting or postpone their internship placement until the next cycle.

We also reserve the right to move a student into a regular internship if the agency can no longer support an internship and the School's educational requirements can no longer be met.

Internship Stipends

Matches are made based on the learning needs of students. We cannot guarantee that students will receive placements that offer stipends or other compensation. The majority of placement opportunities are not funded. Please look in Sonia to receive the most up to date information about funded placements.

Roughly 30% of SSW internships offer stipends to students in a given year. The vast majority of stipends are offered by some of the Department of Veteran Affairs or college counseling centers, all of which are second year placement sites **The SSW has no control over stipends offered by agencies.** All stipends come with requirements set by the agency and may include: second year intern status, bilingual language capacity, commitment to work with clinical populations in low resource areas, increased internship hours above 30 hrs/week, on-call pager duty, etc.

As part of the Practicum Learning team's annual internship planning process, all agency partners are asked whether they can offer a stipend or other compensation for the next internship year. Despite these efforts, unanticipated changes do occur and stipends aren't guaranteed until the start of internship. The team takes into consideration a student's request to be matched to an agency that offers stipends; however, given the multiple variables that influence placement planning (geographic requests, areas of clinical specialization requests, agency requirements, availability of training slots, availability of a car and driver's license, as well as other possible variables), students are strongly cautioned against focusing their internship planning on the *expectation* that a particular stipend will be available.

Commute to Internship Sites

Students should expect that commutes may range anywhere from walking distance to up to driving distances up to an hour and 15 minutes. The Practicum Learning team will make an effort to offer a desired commute-time but cannot guarantee commute times less than 75 minutes. Commuting to practicum is not compensated by the school or the agency. Commuting to practicum is not considered part of your required internship hours. Only hours within the role as a student, once you arrive at your internship, may count as internship time. For example if a student works at one location and mid-day must travel to a second location for supervision, and it takes 20 minutes to arrive, that time is counted as part of your required internship hours.

PRIVACY, HEALTH, AND SAFETY POLICIES

Student Declaration of the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):

This declaration is designed to promote academic integrity, transparency, and the ethical use of AI. While AI can be a valuable educational resource, its misuse can undermine students' meaningful learning experiences. The use of AI should not replace students' critical thinking, creativity, close reading, or original analysis.

As part of student academic responsibilities, students are required to disclose any use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, etc. in the preparation for any assignments in Practicum (including monthly narratives and process recordings). Students' submitted work must ultimately reflect your own effort and understanding of the course materials. Failing to disclose use of AI assistance may be considered a violation of academic integrity in this course.

For each assignment, please include a brief declaration statement at the beginning or end of your assignment:

1. Did you use any AI tools to assist in completing this assignment? (Yes / No)
2. If yes, which tools did you use? (e.g., ChatGPT, Elicit, Grammarly)
3. How did you use them? (e.g., brainstorming ideas, creating an outline, checking grammar, revising for clarity, generating citations, etc.)
4. What content, if any, was generated or suggested by the AI and how did you modify or integrate it into your own work?

Example Statement:

I used ChatGPT to help brainstorm a few topic ideas and generate an outline for this paper. I wrote the paper myself, but I referred to the outline during the writing process. I also used Grammarly for grammar and style checks once I finished the first draft of this paper. I declare that all content submitted is my own original work.

Security of Belongings

All students are expected to have a secure place to keep bags and other belongings while at their internship. It is preferable that the space be one that can be locked, and could be in a desk drawer or filing cabinet. It is best not to leave bags and other personal articles visible and unattended, even in an office with the door closed.

Professional Liability Insurance

Students are insured by SSW for professional and general liability while participating in internship training. A certificate of insurance evidencing coverage will be forwarded to affiliated agencies upon request.

Criminal Background and Health Screenings

Most agencies require that background checks be completed on students prior to the start of internships. Information obtained through background checks may include registered home address, driving status, aliases, criminal history, drug status including drug possession arrests, and any personal protection orders held against the student. Background checks may also include mandatory drug testing, physical examination, tuberculosis screening, and immunization verification.

Agencies requiring these checks are asked to notify the Office of Practicum Learning at the time placement assignments are made and to review all onboarding requirements with students at the time of interview. The Practicum Learning team is available to assist students with information regarding background checks, but it is the student's responsibility to complete and submit to the agency the required materials.

The school reimburses students for the cost of background (CORI) checks. Students requesting reimbursement should retain an original receipt for these expenses and contact the Practicum Learning team for directions about how to submit their request.

In order to ensure compliance with Massachusetts' mandate on health insurance coverage, all SSW students are automatically enrolled in the School's health insurance plan or must show proof of comparable coverage. Students may need to utilize their insurance if additional physical examinations and/or immunizations are required for their internship.

Students must disclose any criminal convictions that might compromise their ability to be accepted for an internship, or eventually employed and/or licensed as a social worker to the Practicum Learning Department on their Internship Planning Form. Disclosure doesn't mean that a student can't be placed; however, depending on the circumstances, certain internships may not be available. The Practicum Learning team is successful at placing students with prior convictions. The key is to communicate this early to the Practicum Learning team so that a plan can be created for both the student and agency.

Health Risks

The School recognizes that social work is practiced in a wide range of settings and that the work, by necessity, sometimes brings exposure to health risks. To assist you in gathering necessary information about potential risks and to help you plan for your health care, we have asked all internship agencies to review health requirements and potential risks during the internship interview. The Practicum Learning Department also requires affiliated agencies to report these requirements annually. Students are encouraged to ask their agency supervisors about any known health or risk factors in their interview and to obtain any information regularly distributed to agency staff (i.e. guidelines regarding universal precautions, recommended TB screenings etc.) As with any other issue, if a student has a concern which is not sufficiently addressed at the internship, they are encouraged to contact their PFA.

COVID-19 Policy

Students should comply with all agency protocols and procedures in regard to COVID-19.

Agency Safety

In addition to SSW providing a required online internship safety skills Moodle course for students, we expect our affiliated agencies to provide comprehensive orientation and training regarding their safety policies and procedures. This should include:

- Building and office security;
- Agency protocols regarding emergency procedures;
- Safety plan when working with agitated clients, including the use of signal or code word to initiate help, de-escalation techniques, use of police or security, and evacuation;
- Staffing plan (students should never be alone in the agency with clients);
- Formulation and posting of a policy regarding provision of services to clients who carry or have guns and weapons, if appropriate;
- Formulation and posting of a policy regarding provision of services to clients who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Home Visits Safety

Home and community visits are an integral part of social work practice. Thorough preparation should include at a minimum:

- Students first observing home visits with staff;
- Being accompanied on their first home visits with staff before being asked to go alone;
- Developing a plan with supervisor to ensure they are aware of student location at all times;
- Having clear backup plan of who to call for consultation;
- Discussing risk-reducing behaviors in the neighborhood and client's home.

Debriefing Critical Incidents

If an incident occurs in which a student is personally threatened or hurt, the student should immediately inform the agency supervisor and PFA. The student should contact the Associate Director/ Practicum Director if their PFA is not available.

The PFA, Associate Director, or Practicum Director will document the incident and the steps taken to address it, and will confer with the student, supervisor, and PFA. Together, they will assess the student's readiness to return to the internship, if applicable, and work toward resolution of the problem.

Prohibited Student Activities

Students are asked to work closely with their supervisors and reach out to their PFAs immediately if they have concerns about their safety. In addition, students in an internship may not be assigned the following activities:

1. Physical restraint of clients;
2. Providing client care at the agency at times when there are no other staff present;
3. Distribution, administer, and/or delivering medication;
4. Transportation of a client with recent history of violent behavior;
5. Clinical responsibility for extremely high risk clients without regular supervisory review;
6. Any activities beyond the scope of social work practice.