Employment-Based Practicum (EBP)

Overview

This is an option for students already employed in social or human services organizations supporting their employees' educational pursuits.

Under this option, students use their **current employment position** as their practicum. Activities from the student's employment position must provide opportunities to integrate theory into practice and speak directly to the core competencies and practice behaviors. In other words, job responsibilities and tasks must relate to the core social work competencies. These criteria can also be met by having students take on additional, new, and different opportunities and responsibilities outside the employment position. For example, students take on a different role within the organization, distinct from their employment position, to ensure that social work competencies and practice behaviors are met.

If an employer supports the student to engage in a completely new role/program within the agency, we strongly encourage them to release the employee from some of their job responsibilities to complete their educational practicum hours (e.g., 25 hours are completed in the employee's regular role and 15-20 hours are completed in the new and separate practicum role). Students approved for this type of EBP may be paid by their employer for their practicum hours (negotiated between student and employer). If an employer can support a student using their current position as their practicum, the student will be paid for their practicum hours.

Requirements for an EBP

MSW students are encouraged to get diverse learning and practice experiences over their two practicum placements, so staying in the same EBP for both years is not an ideal option. However, sometimes, students have the opportunity to stay with the same agency but take on a completely different role that allows for diverse and new learning. In that case, staying at the same agency in an EBP might be an option, although students have to submit a separate continuation proposal to the Field Education Program. **Exceptions to EBP policy may be considered by the Director of Field Education on a case-by-case basis when it can be demonstrated that the proposed practicum can provide a unique educational experience in a new program or with a new focus and with a new agency field instructor**.

The student's employer, the University of Montana School of Social Work, and the student will work together to ensure that the following EBP conditions are met:

- The student must be in good academic standing and good standing at their employing agency. **Students wanting to complete an EBP are strongly encouraged to have been employed at least 3 months** before requesting an EBP because an unsuccessful probationary period is also likely to disrupt the student's field placement.

- The employment supervisor and/or BSW or MSW Agency Field Instructor (= practicum supervisor) must agree that the student's practicum performance will not influence their employment evaluation.

- The agency must be willing to allow the student/employee to attend classes and have an educationally focused field placement experience.

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- The educational opportunities in the place of employment must permit achievement of the 9 social work competencies and skills compatible with the student's social work practice classes and course of study, i.e., Generalist (for BSW and 1st year MSW) or Specialization (for 2nd year MSW)

- Agency Field Instructors for BSW students must have a BSW or MSW from an accredited social work program plus 2 years of post-social work degree experience. Agency field instructors for MSW students must have an MSW from an accredited social work program and two years of post-MSW work experience.

- The Agency Field Instructor and employment supervisor of a student may be the same person. In such cases, supervision time for field education learning must be separate from supervision time for employment (e.g., separate supervision times each week or 30 minutes focused on work and 30 minutes focused on practicum learning). Our goal is to ensure the role of the student as a learner while engaging in their paid employment position. In other words, the student's role as a student should be prioritized along with their learning and skill development.

- If the agency does not have a qualified social work field instructor on staff, they must arrange for an approved off-site BSW/MSW supervisor to provide the required supervision and designate an on-site task supervisor/ agency field instructor to provide daily oversight and support (e.g., some organizations have board members or volunteers that meet degree requirements and can serve in the outside supervisor role). The Field Education Program is available to brainstorm options.

- Students can only count **a maximum of 20 hours per week** towards practicum hours.

- The agency must be willing to sign the UMSSW Practicum Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and agree to the EBP-specific requirements of the MOU. The MOU may not be altered or amended unless agreed to by all persons (student, employer, and field education program). Accordingly, if an agency alters the terms of placement without informing the UMSSW Field Education Program, the field faculty will suspend the EBP placement, which will not be resumed unless a revised agreement can be arranged in a timely manner. Any revised agreement must be written and signed by the agency's Executive Director (or their designee), the student-employee, and the faculty liaison and filed with the Field Education Program.

- The Employment-Based Practicum Application must be received by the deadline specified by the Field Education Program. The application requires a letter of support from the agency director/ employment supervisor and a current job description. In addition, students applying for an EBP must be able to demonstrate how their employment role offers a new role with new and distinct learning opportunities OR how their current employment role relates to the core social work competencies. Once the application is returned to the Field Office, it will be reviewed, and a response will be given as soon as possible to indicate whether the placement has been approved. A site visit may be required as part of the application review process before determining approval.

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- **<u>Employment-Based Practicum is not the same as a paid internship</u>** (i.e., a practicum position receiving a small educational stipend or hourly pay for the 15 hours per week a student contributes to their practicum agency). Consequently, paid internships/ practicums do not fall under the same requirements as the EBP.

Application and Approval Process

1. When completing the Practicum Proposal Form via SONIA, students wanting to complete an EBP must complete all required EBP fields (ideally in consultation with their employer).

2. PPF deadlines, including the EBP application, are program specific and it is the student's responsibility to closely review field education correspondence and be aware of critical deadlines.

3. The Field Education Program reviews the PPF and all EBP information, follows up with additional questions or concerns, and, if necessary, arranges a meeting with the student, the work supervisor, and the proposed agency field instructor (if different than the work supervisor) to discuss the terms and structure of the placement and assure that all parties understand and approve the educational arrangement.

Termination of EBP

If a student in an Employment-Based Practicum is terminated from their employment role, consequently leading to termination of their practicum, the same academic review process will apply as for non-EBP placements (refer to the student handbook). Termination of employment may ultimately lead to a pause in practicum and a delay in a student's graduation timeline.

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