

## **Practicum & Internship FAQs for all tracks**

Updated 1/10/17

**1. What is the process for completing a practicum or internship? Where do I start?**

Students are required to read the entire Practicum and Internship handbook. That is the first step. The rest of the process will begin a full semester (or more) before your desired practicum/internship semester beginning with a site search. The necessary Pre-Registration Form is located on the Forms page of the Counseling Student Resources section of the department website. It will also be sent to your email from the Practicum and Internship Coordinator. After your pre-registration form has been approved, you will be invited to the appropriate Canvas site where you will be able to find all the necessary documents under the "Assignments" tab. You should upload and submit these documents through Canvas.

Documents can also be found on [Messiah College's Counseling Graduate Program's webpage](#). From the Counseling homepage, click on "Counseling student resources", "Forms", and then your prospective field experience (practicum or internship).

**2. How do I go about finding a site in the CMH or MCF counseling tracks?**

Students are encouraged to pursue the field placement process the same way they would approach searching for a job. Begin by searching the Field Experience Site Database for information about sites where other Messiah counseling students have had placements. The database is accessible through:

- MCSquare>>Self-Service Main Menu>>Student Tab>>Field Experience Site Database

Contact any professional connections you may have and consider joining your state's professional counseling association to begin networking in the field. Search the internet for large counseling agencies and behavioral health centers in your area. Many students have also had success by checking with local pastors for recommendations as well.

**3. How do I go about finding a site in the SCH counseling track?**

In order to secure a placement as a school counseling student, please submit your pre-registration form listing the schools you are interested in working with in order of preference. The School Site Coordinator will then make the initial contact to each district on your behalf. After contact has been made, you will be contacted about proceeding with the next step. *Per school districts' request, students are asked not to contact schools on their own until the coordinator has established contact, unless it is your workplace.* Please note that we are at the mercy of the school districts to accommodate our placements and while every effort is made to match you within your desired geographic location, the potential for some commuting time is a possibility and should be expected.

**4. Does Messiah College place students in Practicum & Internship sites?**

For the CMH and MCF tracks, it is primarily the student's responsibility to find a Practicum and Internship site, however, resources and support are available through the Practicum & Internship Coordinator.

**5. When should I start looking for a site?**

Students should begin the process one to two full semesters before the intended practicum or internship date. Some practicum/internship placements are very competitive and conduct interviews a year in advance. Others will only accept internship applications one semester before the desired placement date.

**6. What is the timeframe for completing a practicum or internship?**

The timeframe depends on the semester you plan to complete your practicum/internship. A Fall or Spring semester is 17 weeks. A Summer semester is 14 weeks. This works out to be about 6-7 hours per week for practicum and about 18-20 hours per week for internship, not including the time spent in group supervision (class) or in individual supervision with the faculty supervisor for the course.

**7. What should I know about class attendance for my practicum or internship course?**

Participation in weekly live group supervision (class) is mandatory. Classes typically meet for the full semester on Tuesdays or Thursdays as determined in advance by the faculty.

**8. What is required of my site supervisor?**

Site supervisors for both practicum and internship experiences must have the following qualifications:

- A minimum of a master's degree in counseling or a related profession;
- The appropriate certification and/or license and a minimum of two years of experience in the specified field (three years of experience for SCH track)
- Relevant training in counseling supervision.
- Must agree to provide at least one hour of individual supervision each week.

Additionally, for at least one placement, students in the CMH track are required to have supervision from a Licensed Professional Counselor (or their state's equivalent) while students in the MCF track are required to have supervision from a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist.

**9. What is individual supervision?**

During a student's practicum or internship, individual or triadic supervision is required for one hour each week throughout the semester with that student's supervisor. CACREP defines supervision as a tutorial and mentoring relationship between a member of the counseling professional and one counseling student. Supervision time is an opportunity to discuss case consultations, discuss any system related questions, discuss learning objectives and how those are being met, review any audio/video recordings students are able to make, etc.

**10. What if there are no qualified LPC or LMFT supervisors at the site where I wish to complete my practicum/internship?**

For at least one field experience, you are required to be supervised by someone who holds the same license you are pursuing. If that supervision cannot be obtained at the site you are proposing, you may be able to arrange supervision by a clinical supervisor but would be responsible for any additional fees associated with that arrangement.

**11. Can I have more than one supervisor and/or more than one internship site at a time?**

It is strongly encouraged that practicum and internship students have only one site and one supervisor at a time. Students may seek additional supervision or consultation, but one official supervisor of record needs to be the primary supervisor. In rare instances, a student may be allowed to utilize two sites, for instance, if the primary site does not provide opportunities for group counseling. At times a site may not be able to commit to providing a student with enough hours to complete a full 300-hour internship and students may seek approval to complete a single internship at two different sites to reach the minimum number of hours. Both sites and site supervisors must be approved in advance.

**12. Can I do my practicum and/or internship where I am currently employed?**

Situations in which a student would like to complete Practicum/Internship at his/her place of employment will be reviewed by the Counseling Department and approved on a case-by-case basis. Consideration will be given to the following factors included in the pre-registration form:

- Is the student doing a new job with goals and objectives different from those of his/her day-to-day job? Explain.
- Is the student obtaining a distinctively different experience than is received from his/her regular job? Provide job descriptions and explain.
- Is the proposed site supervisor also the student's work supervisor? If not, please identify each individual.
- What are the student's reasons for wanting to complete the Practicum/Internship at his/her place of employment?
- How will the student adjust his/her schedule to accommodate the Practicum/Internship hours?

Your clinical/site supervisor may not have any administrative supervision relationship with you (such as hiring, firing, or performance review) which would constitute a dual relationship.

**13. Can I complete my practicum/internship at a site where I may encounter dual relationships (e.g., my church, the school my children attend, the school I previously attended, etc...)?**

Completing a Practicum/Internship at a site where dual relationships are possible is strongly discouraged and will be reviewed by the Counseling Department and approval will be made on a case-by-case basis. If approved, supervising faculty should be aware of the situation so they can help prepare the student for the role change, relationship change, and dynamics that may be experienced. If a student suspects he/she will encounter a dual relationship at the potential site, this information should be disclosed on the Pre-Registration Form.

**14. Can I do both internships at one time?**

Only students in the school counseling track may complete two internships in one semester because their internships do not build on one another developmentally the same ways the CMH or MCF internships do.

**15. What if my site does not allow video recording?**

It is important as well as necessary to meet our accreditation standards that students have the opportunity to develop videotapes of their interactions with clients appropriate to the area of specialization for use in supervision, while still complying with confidentiality and privacy laws and only with signed consent of the client. Students may not select sites for all three field experiences that do not allow videotaping. If videotaping is not allowed at your site, please refer to the following options:

- Video Session with camera focused only on you (not the client): Most ideal.
- Audio Sessions: If opting for audio only, we would like the audio sessions you complete to be supervised live by your site supervisor so that she/he can write notes about what may be happening non-verbally during the session and can debrief the session with you. It would be like them watching a video and taking notes but instead they would be doing it live, yet you would still have the audio recording to meet the course assignment/CACREP requirement and could listen to the session while reading the notes. If video or audio tapes are not permitted to leave your site, you may transcribe the sessions to present during group supervision.
- Videotaping a mock session: Cannot be used as an option for all three classes, must have approval by your advisor at internship level.

**16. Can I complete all three field experiences at the same site?**

Students are each required to have at least two different field experience sites. This could be in the form of a Practicum at Site A and two Internships at Site B; one Practicum and one Internship at Site A and a second Internship at Site B; or a Practicum at Site A, first Internship at Site B, and a second Internship at Site A.

**17. What should I know about the group counseling requirement?**

All students must gain experience in facilitating or co-facilitating groups. The new CACREP standards (2016) have been updated to allow students to meet the requirement for group counseling facilitation during their practicum or internships. Students must take the group counseling class before they are able to satisfy this requirement.

**18. SCH Track Only: Does a middle school placement count towards a secondary or elementary Internship?**

Elementary is considered to be pre-kindergarten - grade 8 and secondary is for grades 7-12. One internship must be elementary and one must be secondary. Efforts are made to ensure that students gain experience at both the elementary and high school level, realizing that each student in the School Counseling track is strongly recommended to have field experiences at the elementary and high school level, with a minimum of at least 20 hours of experience at each level. Practicum may be spent working with either elementary, middle, or high school students.

**19. May I start accruing hours before the beginning of the semester or finish my hours early?**

Students are NOT permitted to begin accumulating hours on site (even if the site has been approved) until they are registered for the course and the semester has begun. Students may only be on site and collect hours within the confines of the semester's beginning and end dates. Any requests to attend training or orientation activities prior to the semester to count towards their field experience starting must be approved by the Practicum & Internship Coordinator and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Students are not permitted to front-load hours in order to finish their field experience early. Obviously there will be some fluctuation from week to week, but generally the hours should be equally divided over the course of the full semester.

**20. What is the difference between direct and indirect hours?**

CACREP defines direct hours as "direct service with actual clients that contributes to the development of counseling skills". Direct service would include counseling or co-counseling with individuals, couples, families, or groups, or consulting with the parents/family of a client. Indirect hours include weekly meetings with the site supervisor, administrative work, case consultation, staff meetings, in-services, treatment planning, observing sessions, and report writing.

**21. What do I need to know if I am planning to stay at the same site for both internships, or a practicum and an internship?**

You will need to pre-register for each field experience separately so we can be sure to save you a seat in the course and so we can give you access to the Canvas site to submit your paperwork. A new contract is required for each semester to reflect the dates associated with each semester. **Due to liability issues, no hours may be completed between semesters.**