

Frequently Asked Questions about MSWO Practicum Placement

1. I am employed full-time. How do students who are employed full-time complete the practicum requirements?

Most students enrolled in our program have multiple roles such as student, caretaker, employee, etc. Practicum is the signature pedagogy of social work education and in the UNE MSW program, we offer a variety of models to complete the practicum to try to allow opportunities for students with competing demands to be successful in attaining their MSW. However, if you do have a full time job, without some flexibility in your schedule, it may be more challenging to find a practicum. Some students look to reduce their hours at work or change their schedule (for example work four 10-hour days instead of 5 days per week etc.). Students who have less flexible work schedules would be asked to explore agencies that offer the bulk of their services on the evening or weekends, for example. We encourage you to speak with a practicum faculty member to explore practicum options and consider your specific needs.

2. When would I enter a practicum and when does practicum planning begin?

Approximately 6 – 8 months prior to the time when you will enter a practicum, you will enter the practicum planning process, and will be enrolled in a non-credit bearing practicum planning orientation. At this point, you will be matched with a practicum faculty member who will guide you through the practicum planning and final approval process.

3. Do students receive help in finding a practicum?

Yes! Though students will ultimately choose the agency they complete a practicum with, they will have a practicum faculty who partners with them through all phases of practicum planning, searching for an agency, completing interviews, and ensuring the agency's learning opportunities align with CSWE and program requirements. This practicum planning model is designed to mimic a job search to increase student competence and confidence in job searching for post graduation.

4. Can a student get paid for their practicum?

Maybe! There are a few ways that students might get paid for their practicum which include the option to use their job as practicum (if the role meets the learning requirements) or to receive a stipend provided by the agency. While a paid practicum is possible, agency stipends are rare, and a student's job may not meet requirements. It's important to speak with your practicum faculty about your options.

5. How many hours per week are students expected to be in their practicum?

This is dependent on which practicum (generalist or specialization) and which practicum model (Traditional, BLOCK, or SOS) the student chooses.

Generalist year students are required to complete a minimum of 400 practicum hours and can choose from the following models:

- Traditional (32 week, 12-13 hours per week)
- Block (16 weeks, 25-28 hours per week)
- or the SOS Mixed Learning Methods Model (16 weeks simulation/16 weeks onsite, 12-13 hours per week simulation and on-site)

Specialization year students are required to complete a minimum of 500 practicum hours and can choose from the following models:

- Traditional (32 week, 16-18 hours per week) Practicum experience
- Block (16 weeks, 35 hours per week)
- or the SOS Mixed Learning Method Model (16 weeks simulation/16 weeks onsite - 16-18 hours per week for simulation and on-site)

6. If a student is working in a social service agency (current or new job), can those hours count as practicum hours?

Maybe! CSWE and the UNE MSW program does allow students to use their job as practicum if the employment role meets the learning requirements. Once you are eligible to enter a practicum and begin the practicum planning process, you can speak with your practicum faculty member about this option.

7. Who can be a Practicum Instructor, the individual who provides the 1 hour per week of MSW guided supervision/practicum instruction?

Practicum Instructions must have an MSW from an accredited school of social work and have at least 2 years of post graduation social work experience. When students use their job as practicum, this person cannot be their employment supervisor – they must have a different person providing the practicum supervision/practicum instruction.

8. What if there is not an MSW on site at the agency?

In some circumstances students find an agency and learning opportunities that meet the requirements, however, there is not an MSW on staff within the agency. In this case, students can find an Off-Site Practicum Instructor who will partner with the agency On-Site Supervisor to support their learning experience. To find an Off-Site Practicum Instructor, students are recommended to:

- Ask the agency if they know of an MSW who works closely with or is familiar with their agency's services
- Consider if there is a professor (current or former) in the MSW program that you've connected well with in the MSW program that you'd like to ask.
- Do you have any MSWs in your professional network that you'd want to ask (cannot have someone you have a personal or therapeutic relationship with)?

If none of these considerations yields an MSW who is able to provide Off-Site Practicum Instruction, you can work with your UNE Practicum Faculty as the UNE Practicum Team has a list of MSWs who are willing to provide off-site Practicum Instruction to UNE MSW students.

9. Do MSW Practicum Instructors need to be paid for practicum instruction time?

If it is part of their role as an employee with the agency, then yes, their time supervising you will be paid as part of their employment. However, under no circumstances should students pay an MSW to provide practicum instruction.

10. I think I have an agency that will host me for my practicum. What do I do now?

Once you are eligible to enter practicum planning, you will be enrolled in a practicum planning orientation and be connected with a practicum faculty member who will work with you to determine if the agency and learning opportunities meet the requirements and will guide you through the next steps.

11. Will a criminal background check and/or fingerprints or immunizations be required by the agency?

It could be. This is a great question to ask at the agency interview.

12. Will the practicum agency expect students to transport clients, and if so, will students have to use their own car?

This depends on the agency. It is important to ask these questions at the time of the interview.

13. Will the practicum agency require students to attend an orientation/training prior to working with clients?

Possibly. Ask about this during your agency interview. At the very least, there should be a planful onboarding process for the student to orient to the agency and learning opportunities.

14. Can students participate in physically restraining clients?

No. The UNE MSW program prohibits students from completing hands on holds or restraints to clients during practicum hours. If a student is using their job as practicum and this is a requirement for their role, the UNE practicum faculty will discuss with the student and the agency that any time spent engaged in physical interventions with clients will not be allowed to be counted as practicum hours.

15. Does UNE's MSW program keep a list of previously used agencies?

Yes! Here is the link: <https://success.une.edu/social-work/msw-field-placements/>

*Please note, this is not an exhaustive directory and students are not expected to choose an agency from this directory.

16. Can you complete a practicum within the agency that you are employed and in a different department or role than the one in which you are employed?

Yes! This is called a Place of Employment Practicum or a POE. Once you are eligible to enter practicum planning, you will be enrolled in a practicum planning orientation and connected with a practicum faculty member who will work with you to determine if the agency and learning opportunities meet the requirements and will guide you through the next steps.

17. Can students complete a fully remote practicum?

Maybe. If agencies can provide all of the required learning opportunities in a remote capacity, the UNE MSW practicum team will consider if this can be approved. However, fully remote practicums may take a longer time to secure and complicate your search to find a practicum. The UNE MSW program does not maintain a list of fully remote opportunities. Students seeking a fully remote practicum will be expected to complete the practicum planning process and agency search as all students are required to complete.

18. What are the most common reasons a student has difficulty finding an agency with which to complete a practicum?

There are a few reasons that students may not initially be successful in finding an agency to complete their practicum. The first is when students have very limited flexibility in their schedule and need to find an agency that can provide practicum opportunities at very rigid or specific times only. Other reasons may include students living in rural areas where there are limited agencies and social services or when students live in close proximity to other large schools of social work who exclusively host students from the local schools. Practicum faculty members are well versed in working with students to try to overcome barriers and will discuss options and provide

as much flexibility and support in finding a practicum as is allowable by accreditation and program requirements. Additional reasons include a student who is living abroad and seeking an international practicum or a student who is seeking a fully remote practicum - both of these are much more challenging for students to find.

19. Can students complete practicums if they are living abroad or internationally?

Yes, when a student is living abroad or is stationed abroad with the military, this may be an option. Finding international practicums can take longer to find and complete the final approval steps and so you will want to reach out to your practicum faculty as soon as you are enrolled in a practicum planning orientation and begin the search as soon as possible.