

EXSC499  
**Professional Practicum Handbook and Guidelines**  
1-12 credits

**Table of Contents**

Introduction, Goals, and Objectives of the Professional Practicum.....2

Course Requirements and Professional Practicum Portfolio.....3

Responsibilities of the Student.....4

Responsibilities of the Practicum Host Site Supervisor.....5

Student Responsibilities and Expectations from Host-Site Supervisor.....6

Responsibilities of the University and Student’s Advisor.....7

Student Performance Evaluation.....8

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).....9

## **Introduction, Goals, and Objectives of the Professional Practicum**

### **Introduction**

Student involvement in professional field experience has significant value for both their academic career and professional learning. The practical application of classroom learning provides meaning and fulfillment to a formal education, allowing for real-world connection to classroom experiences and learning. The purpose of the professional practicum is to supplement your formal classroom instruction of scientific theory and concepts, and to begin the development of professional competency.

This handbook has been prepared to assist students, faculty, administrators, and site supervisors in understanding the objectives, policies, procedures, and requirements for the professional practicum/internship at SMSU.

### **Program Goal**

The goal of the Professional Practicum is to provide students in exercise science with further educational and practical experiences in a professional setting. Students are encouraged to seek opportunities related to their career choice or aspirations for graduate/professional school.

### **Objectives**

1. Students will learn what it means to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times.
2. Students will display qualities of dependability and responsibility.
3. Students will have the opportunity to explore their interest in a particular career and develop comprehensive understanding of the job requirements.
4. Students will demonstrate a practical application of knowledge of understanding of human movement and exercise.
5. Students will develop skills in application of theory and knowledge related to the profession.
6. Students will have the opportunity to assess their aptitude for a particular career.
7. Students will develop the interpersonal skills that will lead to a successful career.
8. Students will develop an employment record and references in their field of study that will enhance their employment or graduate school opportunities.
9. The practicum experience will motivate the student to pursue additional educational/learning experiences.
10. Upon completion of the professional practicum, the student will be better prepared to enter the profession or graduate school.

### **Course Requirements and Professional Practicum Portfolio**

The professional practicum course provides an educational experience in which the student acquires observation/practical hours in an occupation directly related to her/his career interest in exercise science. This course provides an opportunity to apply knowledge from the classroom into a more practical, hands-on atmosphere. The professional practicum course requires extensive applied exercise science experience at a cooperating facility (e.g., hospital, medical clinic, public agency, athletics department, wellness center/gym, etc).

The student can register for EXSC499: Professional Practicum for 1-12 credits during any semester, but it is suggested during your final two academic years. Each student requires special permission from the faculty advisor prior to registration. Once your advisor has approved your practicum/internship site, an override code will be provided so that you can register.

Each 1 credit is worth 30 hours of observation/experience in a professional setting. The student is *required* to take at least 3 credits of EXSC499: Professional Practicum as a graduation requirement (3cr = 90 hours of observation).

After the completion of your practicum hours, the **Professional Practicum Portfolio** must be completed and submitted as a *single file* to your advisor. Portfolio elements are listed below:

- a. Student Responsibilities and Expectations from Host Site Supervisor (pre-practicum)
- b. Statement of Professional Philosophy and Career Goals
- c. Professional Resume
- d. Log of Hours Worked
- e. Student Performance Evaluation (post-practicum)
- f. Personal Assessment of your Practicum Experience

Submission format of the Practicum Portfolio is up to the discretion of your academic advisor.

### **Responsibilities of the Student**

1. Discuss acceptable practicum/internship sites with your advisor, then contact potential sites to request a meeting/interview (suggested at least a semester before registering for EXSC499).
2. Register for EXSC499: Professional Practicum (1-12cr; requires override code for registration).
3. If requested, provide the host site supervisor with a resume and any other necessary documents.
4. Meet with the host site and your site supervisor to develop appropriate learning objectives, then fill out the **Student Responsibilities and Expectations from Host-Site Supervisor** form and include in your *Professional Practicum Portfolio*.
5. Perform all training procedures at host site with sincerity and diligence.
6. Abide by all applicable rules and policies of the host site, maintain regular and prompt attendance, and contact the appropriate supervisor when questions or issues arise.
7. Perform all of the duties and responsibilities of the position in a professional manner. Remember that you are also representing SMSU and the Exercise Science Program as well as yourself.
8. Maintain confidentiality with regard to sensitive information gained in the work environment.
9. Participate openly and honestly in the evaluation process and include the **Student Performance Evaluation** in your *Professional Practicum Portfolio*.
10. Complete all portions of the *Professional Practicum Portfolio* and submit them to your faculty supervisor within the time-specified guidelines.

### **Responsibilities of the Practicum Host Site and Supervisor**

The Exercise Science Program is a member of the Science Department at Southwest Minnesota State University and the curriculum requires students to complete an practicum/internship experience designed to enhance their professional preparation for a career in a related field. The practical experiences provide by an internship opportunity are essential to our student’s job search or application to graduate/professional school.

We thank you for your willingness to assist in the educational development of our students and a future generation of professional employees in your field. The responsibilities of the supervisor include but are not limited to the following:

1. The supervisor should establish a selection criteria, application, and interview process for selecting quality interns. If you wish to share these procedures with the faculty in the Exercise Science Program at Southwest Minnesota State University, we will assist in screening potential students. Only competent students should be accepted for the internship position.
2. Establish responsibilities and expectations for the student-intern. These responsibilities and expectations should represent the duties of a practicing professional in the field and clearly articulated to the student.
3. Provide supervision of all duties and responsibilities of the student intern.
4. The supervisor should notify the student’s academic advisor of any problems associated with the student’s performance, conduct, or personal interactions while representing your organization.
5. The supervisor should serve as a mentor to the student-intern and provide guidance in their professional development.
6. Periodically meet with the student-intern to discuss job performance and professional development.
7. Complete the **Student Performance Evaluation** (page 8) and discuss your responses with the student before returning it to the academic advisor in the Exercise Science Program.

#### **Contact Information:**

Student-Intern: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: Exercise Science Program – Science Dept. Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Southwest Minnesota State University  
Marshall, MN 56258

### **Student Responsibilities and Expectations from Host-Site Supervisor**

After reviewing the objectives of the Professional Practicum, the Supervisor and the student should establish a list of responsibilities and expectations for the duration of the practicum. This list should guide the student's experience and serve as the basis for the Supervisor's evaluations at the conclusion of the practicum. The number and detail of responsibilities is at the discretion of the employer/supervisor. If the Organization has an established criteria for interns, that may serve as the "intern's responsibilities."

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

**Responsibilities of the University or Faculty Advisor**

1. Provide the student with focused options for what constitutes a suitable practicum/internship site consistent with the student's career goals.
2. Participate in developing the learning objectives and the methods of evaluation for the practicum.
3. Support students by providing advice and guidance throughout their practicum experience.
4. Provide the host site with appropriate instruments for evaluating the student (see the **Student Performance Evaluation**; next page).
5. Verify practicum hours with the host site after the student has complete their internship.
6. Analyze the student's Professional Practicum Portfolio and assign an appropriate grade to the student based on performance.

**Student Performance Evaluation**

**Name of Student-Intern:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** The immediate supervisor(s) of the student-intern will objectively evaluate the performance and potential of the student compared to other interns of comparable education and experience.

**Excellent - Very Good – Average - Below Average - Poor**

1. Attendance \_\_\_\_\_

2. Professionalism \_\_\_\_\_

3. Quality of Work \_\_\_\_\_

4. Relationship with co-workers \_\_\_\_\_

5. Interactions with public \_\_\_\_\_

6. Communication ability \_\_\_\_\_

7. Knowledge of human movement & exercise \_\_\_\_\_

8. Knowledge related to field \_\_\_\_\_

9. Judgment \_\_\_\_\_

10. Dependability \_\_\_\_\_

11. Motivation to be successful \_\_\_\_\_

12. Overall performance \_\_\_\_\_

13. Potential in the field \_\_\_\_\_

14. Strengths of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

15. Weakness of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

16. Additional Comments (if needed use back): \_\_\_\_\_



## FAQs

*My practicum/internship/observation site requires an official application and contract*

- Some sites will require you to have a contract with SMSU including a background check, liability insurance, immunizations, and other various legal documentation. If this is the case, send an email to Christy Johnson ([Christy.Johnson@smsu.edu](mailto:Christy.Johnson@smsu.edu)) and cc' your advisor requesting a contract including the following:
  - Name of the site where you intend to do your internship
  - Contact (name, phone, email, fax) of your hiring manager or supervisor at the site
  - Title of the internship/role
  - Description of internship/practicum responsibilities

*Does SMSU or my advisor help me find a site?*

- Not directly. Finding sites are solely the responsibility of the student. However, your faculty advisor must approve all sites. Your advisor can also provide suggestions of where you can complete your practicum.

*Can I do my experience at multiple sites?*

- Yes! In fact, multiple sites are encouraged as they provide an opportunity for multiple perspectives and opportunities for hands on learning.

*Has a student ever been asked to leave a site?*

- Yes. Supervisors do have the power to release a student if they feel the student is not meeting expectations.

*Can I use a site I have been working at in order to collect my hours?*

- Yes, but only if your faculty advisor approves your ability to do so.

*Can I spend more than the minimum number of hours at the site?*

- Yes. In fact, some sites may have their own minimum hour requirement. Obtaining more hours can often assist you in learning more and gaining better experiences.

*When should I start thinking about sites?*

- The best advice is to start looking for a site during the semester BEFORE you intend to do your experience.

*Do I have to apply to a site?*

- Maybe. Sites may have their own process of obtaining approval to volunteer at their facility. If the site is a hospital or clinic, usually the Human Resources Department can assist with this process. Most sites will have their own training procedures/hours that can be included in your practicum hours. Some sites may also require an Interview.

*What are some examples of sites?*

- Students have spent their experiences at a wide variety of sites. The key is to make sure it relates to exercise science and to your intended career. It's always best to consider sites based on the area/population with which you intend to work. For example, if you want to work with children or youth locally, consider the Girls on the Run Program, if you want to work with older adults locally, consider an Assisted Living facility.
- Hours related to Professional Graduate Programs Professional programs such as Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Cardiac Rehab, Physician Assistant, Physician, Dentistry, etc. all require hours spent in a clinic. In most cases, graduate programs require a specific number of hours in the field that you must complete, so be sure to familiarize yourself with their program requirements. It is the student's responsibility to know what is required for their chosen future graduate program. The best advice is to search for these requirements early in their career.