

Fieldwork Experience Guidelines

INFOST 990

Purpose of the Fieldwork Experience

The fieldwork course is designed to provide library and information science students with practical experience. In the master's program it is normally taken as a culminating educational activity prior to beginning a professional position and is not intended for students who have had substantial previous work experience in libraries. Still, an experienced student who desires or needs particular experience in a new type of librarianship would be encouraged to enroll. This latter situation may also occur for past graduates who are enrolled in the Certificate of Advanced Study programs. These students have had at least two years of experience after obtaining a master's degree, but may be changing professional direction. The students must complete all prerequisites listed prior to beginning the fieldwork.

Fieldwork offers the student an opportunity to test theory in practice, to work with people in everyday situations, and to relate materials to library experience, and it can help to bridge the gap between the classroom and the job.

Structure of the Fieldwork Experience

DIRECTION: A single placement involves 50 to 150 hours of student time and can earn the student from one to three credits. 50 hrs = 1 credit; 100 hrs = 2 credits; 150 hrs = 3 credits. Ten hours work per week for as many weeks as needed for the correct total is a practical norm, although the number of hours can be compressed to a shorter time period if this serves the purposes of the library and of the student. Expansion into a longer time is also possible, but the regulatory necessity of completing the work within a semester must be kept in mind.

SCHEDULING: The convenience of both the student and the field supervisor should be considered in setting work hours. In general, a student should not be scheduled to work during a time in which no professional supervisor is present. This means that the student must negotiate with the field supervisor to find a mutually acceptable schedule. Any violation of the agreed-upon schedule should be reported to the student's faculty advisor for the fieldwork.

TYPE OF WORK: The field experience should have the basic characteristics of profession level work in a particular type of library. The student should be permitted to observe and participate in a wide variety of library activities. In no case should the student be used as a substitute for the employment of a professional librarian, a library technical assistant, or a library clerk. The student's work should constitute a learning experience with as much breadth as possible in the limited time available; no student should be assigned merely to a single task during the entire period of the field experience, nor should the student be given exclusively clerical work to do. At the onset of the field experience, the field supervisor and the student should agree upon the nature of the assignment, and the basic work schedule. Any violation of this agreement should be reported to the faculty advisor.

Responsibilities of the Student

1. Negotiate with field supervisor and faculty advisor to determine an appropriate work assignment and schedule.
2. Carry out the work assignment as agreed and negotiate, if necessary, any changes in schedule or assignment with both field supervisor and faculty advisor.
3. Keep the faculty advisor informed of the work experience.
4. Complete the Evaluation Report of 3-5 pages, which includes a factual and evaluative statement of each activity, time spent on each, and a general statement of the quality of the overall fieldwork experience.
5. Secure an "exit interview" with the field supervisor to discuss the job experience and the supervisor's degree of satisfaction with the experience.

Fieldwork Experience Guidelines for Student, Field Supervisor, and Faculty Advisor Responsibilities of the Faculty Fieldwork Mentor

1. Confer with the student prior to the onset of the field experience, to help the student understand what is expected and how the evaluation is to be conducted.
2. Visit the student at the job site at least one time and confer with the field supervisor. In lieu of a visit, discussions need to take place via phone or email for those students completing the program via Distance Education.
3. Arrange for at least one three-way conference to bring together the student, the field supervisor, and the faculty advisor.
4. Confer with the student at the end of the experience to determine the overall success of the program.
5. Evaluate the student and the materials he/she submits and assign a grade in L&I Sci 990, based upon the written evaluation sheets prepared by the field supervisor, the student, and the faculty advisor.

Responsibilities of Field Supervisor

1. Confer with the student to determine work schedule and type of work that will be undertaken. Supervise the student during the work experience by either being present during the student's work hours or by delegating another professional employee to supervise the student for a particular work period.
2. The supervisor should have regular conferences with the student to assess progress and to provide guidance in understanding the agency and his/her role in it. Share new developments in the field with the student. Invite the student to attend staff meetings as an observer.
3. Report to the faculty advisor any unresolved problems relating to the student's work schedule or performance.
4. Evaluate the student's work by filling out an evaluation form to be supplied by the SOIS Office
5. Report to the faculty advisor any suggestions for improvement of the program.

Responsibilities of the SOIS Office of Career Services and Placement

1. Following are the three documents which the SOIS Office will obtain:
 - a) Consent, direct written (or alternatively oral or via email) for placement from the site supervisor;
 - b) Master Agreement (a form dealing mainly with insurance liability);
 - c) Program Memorandum (an agreement between SOIS and the site supervisor that the student will indeed be at the site, within the terms of the Master Agreement).
3. The SOIS Office of Career Services and Placement is responsible for informing the site supervisor of all policies and procedures involved in student placement.
4. The SOIS Office of Career Services and Placement will act on complaints of student's misconduct, tardiness or other violation of ethical or professional standards.
5. The SOIS Office of Career Services and Placement will act on documented complaints of discrimination because of race, age, gender, national origin, or disability.

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