

Securing Your Psychology Practicum

Psychology Practicum

Jeffrey D. Leitzel, Ph.D., coordinator
McCormick Center 2116
jleitzel@bloomu.edu Office 570-389-4232 Cell 570-650-6286

- [Course Information \(Psych 497\)](#)
- [Getting Started](#)
- [Initial Interview](#)
- [Resume, Background Checks](#)
- [Interview in Practicum Setting](#)
- [Second Interview](#)
- [Form 509, Clearance and Scheduling](#)
- [Beginning Your Practicum](#)
- [Sample Practicum Resume](#)

Psychology Practicum, the internship course for psychology, is optional for psychology majors and counts as one capstone course. Only psychology majors may take the Psychology Practicum. These are the steps for planning and securing a practicum placement. This guide will help ensure you take all of the necessary steps. Consent of instructor is required to take a practicum.

The practicum coordinator will only give that consent if you follow the rules and instructions noted below. Practicum must be taken during your senior year, and you must have earned 90 credits toward graduation by the time you begin your practicum.

Practicum is only offered during the fall and spring semesters. There is no summer practicum course.

To apply for Practicum, you must have already completed the Experimental Applications (Psych 282) course, with a grade of C- or better. If you are currently taking Experimental Applications, the practicum coordinator can answer your questions, but he will not begin planning a practicum with you until after you have completed the applications course and received a grade of C- or better.

Why is Experimental Applications required?

Both Practicum and Experimental Applications require personal responsibility, initiative, attention to detail, completing assignments on time and in a professional manner, and high-quality independent work. In a study of Practicum performance, every student who received a grade of D in Experimental Applications had major problems with his/her Practicum.

You may only take Practicum once. If you take a Practicum, you cannot take an internship course in any other department within the College of Liberal Arts. If you have already taken another internship course, you may not take Practicum. This is a policy of the College of Liberal Arts.

Practicum may be taken for any number of credits from 3 to 15, including numbers of credits that are not multiples of 3. However, the number of credits must be approved by Jeffrey Leitzel. He will base that judgment on the quality of the learning experience and supervision that is offered by the proposed Practicum setting.

Practicum involves two parts:

- Practicum students are placed in mental health, educational, human service settings, and other settings. After an initial observation period, you will have the responsibilities of an entry-level staff member, under supervision of a professional in the Practicum setting. (For practicum, this person is termed the

field supervisor.) You will also be supervised by Jeffrey Leitzel. Our department typically does not place students in business or industrial-organizational settings, however, if you have strong interests in IO psychology, you should discuss with Dr. Leitzel.

- Practicum students must attend weekly class meetings on campus. These meetings involve discussion of what you are learning from your practicum experiences. In addition, practicum students read chapters from a required textbook on ethical issues, write weekly papers, and write summary papers at the end of the course. (If your practicum is distant from Bloomsburg, you are required to attend the first weekly class, then submit weekly papers and a weekly journal.)

Your performance in practicum will be graded as satisfactory or unsatisfactory, not as a grade of A-F. To pass the course, you must complete all course requirements at a professional level of performance. Your Practicum grade will not affect your cumulative grade point average, nor will it count toward your maximum number of pass-fail classes.

Your performance in Practicum is evaluated in two ways:

- by your field supervisor, summarized in an evaluation form at the end of the practicum;
- by Jeffrey Leitzel, based on your class attendance and participation, the quality of your papers, and your overall level of performance in practicum.

There have been a few cases of students who failed the practicum course. It is very important to perform at a professional level in completing all your duties, in both the field setting and in the Practicum class meetings and assignments.

Getting Started

Consider what you want to learn in a practicum. Write a list of the things that you want to learn in a practicum.

- What do you want to learn about yourself?
- What skills do you want to develop?
- In what type of setting do you want to work?
- With what client population do you wish to work?
- With what client age group do you wish to work?
- What occupations are you interested in exploring?
- What are your plans for a career, and for graduate study if you choose?
- How will Practicum help you make decisions about your education and career plans?

Decide on the semester in which you plan to take a practicum: Discuss this with your advisor. If you plan to attend graduate school immediately after graduating from BU, completing practicum before you apply to graduate programs is usually best (usually a fall practicum).

If you plan to work immediately after graduation, a Practicum in your final semester is usually best. Plan your courses so that you will meet the prerequisites for practicum. You must have completed Experimental Applications with a grade of C- or better before you can apply for practicum. You must have earned 90 credits toward graduation by the time you begin your Practicum.

Some Practicum settings require background in specific areas of psychology. To work in an adult mental health setting, you should have passed either Introduction to Abnormal Psychology (Psych 235) or Psychological Disorders (Psych 335). To work in a setting involving children, you must have passed either Early Child Development (Psych 211), Adolescent Development (Psych 212), or Developmental Psychopathology (Psych 337).

Decide tentatively how many Practicum credits that you wish to take: You may take 3-15 Practicum credits, including numbers of credits that are not multiples of 3. All Practicum credits must be taken during one semester. Only three credits count toward the Psychology major; the rest are electives. It is strongly recommended that practicum be at least 6 credits, as this makes for a far richer experience than a 3 credit practicum.

Jeffrey Leitzel makes the final decision regarding the number of credits allowed for your Practicum. The best learning experiences usually occur in a Practicum involving six to nine credits. However, there are many exceptions to this rule of thumb. Think carefully about what you want to learn in a Practicum, and about what other courses you may be taking in the semester that you take Practicum. Over the whole semester, you must work 40 hours in the practicum setting for each credit you receive.

If you work in the practicum setting all 15 weeks of the semester (classes plus finals week):

- a 3-credit Practicum thus requires 8 hours per week in the field setting;
- a 6-credit Practicum, 16 hours per week;
- a 9-credit Practicum, 24 hours per week; and so on.

You will arrange your specific schedule with your field supervisor in the practicum setting, but you must complete all the hours required for the number of credits that you scheduled for practicum. Most students take courses on campus while performing a part-time practicum. It is best if you take no more than one other 300-level or 400-level psychology course concurrently with your practicum. (If you take only a 3-credit practicum, it is less risky to take two other 300-level or 400-level course concurrently.)

Taking the General Psychology TA course (Psych 341) usually means that you cannot find full days for a practicum, although there are exceptions to this. Schedule conflicts with other classes may limit or prevent doing a practicum. Many practicum settings require two or three full days per week in the setting, with no time off for classes on those days. It is best to plan a schedule to spend either T Th or M W F in your practicum setting, and schedule classes for other days or evenings that you are not in practicum.

Remember that practicum itself requires class meetings one evening a week, plus readings and papers. **Consider where you would like to perform a practicum.** Most students perform a Practicum in the Bloomsburg area. You need a car for almost all local placements. There are a limited number of placements within walking distance of BU.

A few students take Practicum in field placements distant from Bloomsburg, often at home. Placements outside the Bloomsburg region are more difficult to arrange and require more effort by the student to arrange. We do not guarantee that a suitable practicum setting can be found. Dr. Leitzel must be satisfied that any practicum placement is worthy of granting academic credit for your work there.

Just because you are willing to do a practicum in a setting, and they are willing to have you as a student, does not mean that the setting will offer learning experiences that are worthy of Psychology Practicum credit. It is rare for a Psychology Practicum student to be paid for their work. Also, for a practicum in a setting where you are employed, the learning requirements of practicum often conflict with the time and requirements of the paid job. Exceptions can be made; discuss this with Jeffrey Leitzel.

Recent student practicum placements have involved working with:

- School psychologists, guidance counselors, and other professionals in schools;
- Community treatment programs for children and youth with psychological disorders or at risk of those disorders;
- Residential settings for treatment of children and youth with psychological disorders, including substance dependence;
- Community mental health programs for adults;
- A state psychiatric hospital, and behavioral health units in general hospitals, for adults;
- Shelters and centers for women who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault;
- Federal Prison Inmates
- State Prison Inmates
- Juvenile probation and youth correctional settings;
- Community and residential services for senior citizens.

Initial Interview with Faculty Coordinator

Contact the practicum coordinator to schedule an initial interview. Obtain the Psychology Practicum Application form. Complete the application and email it to Dr. Leitzel prior to the interview. **Deadlines for an initial interview** — for a practicum during Spring semester: Oct. 1 and for a practicum during the Fall semester: March 1.

At the interview, the practicum coordinator will consider your readiness for a practicum, including your previous academic performance, prerequisites, goals and interests, and availability of placement settings. The practicum coordinator may not be able to tell you if you are accepted into the course at the time of the interview. We have only a limited number of placements for practicum. Not all applicants are accepted for the course, even if they meet the prerequisites.

The practicum coordinator also may decide that a student is not ready for the responsibilities of a Practicum experience. If the practicum coordinator accepts you as a practicum student, he will work with you to find a practicum setting to match your goals and interests. If you wish to do a practicum in Bloomsburg, the practicum coordinator may give you a name and phone number to contact for an interview with the field supervisor.

Do not interview for a Practicum at a Bloomsburg-area placement without our approval. Our field supervisors are busy persons, their time is valuable, and they generally want to interview potential Practicum students only after you have interviewed with the practicum coordinator. If you wish to do a practicum outside the region, you and the practicum coordinator will work together to identify and contact possible settings. You may speak with someone at an out-of-town placement before your first interview with the practicum coordinator but understand that the practicum coordinator must approve your readiness for Practicum as well as the appropriateness of that setting before you can schedule a practicum there.

Resume and Background Checks

You will need a resume for the next step of contacting a setting and interviewing there. If you do not have a resume ready, see a suggested resume for Psychology Practicum settings at the end of this document.

To work in a practicum setting with person under age 18, you **MUST** obtain Pennsylvania criminal and child abuse background clearances, AND the FBI background clearance.

All of these clearances require completing a form online and paying a fee.

FBI Criminal Background Clearance (fingerprint clearance) do not do this until you are sure you need to be fingerprinted

<https://uenroll.identogo.com/>

You will need a service code, which is 1KG6ZJ. You can set up an appointment for fingerprinting on the Identogo website, you will provide your info and set up the soonest appointment closest to you. As of now, the closest location is in Berwick.

Next you will interview with a person in the setting where you wish to perform your practicum. It is your responsibility to schedule this interview, with the approval of the practicum coordinator. It is best to interview with only one setting at a time and decide about the appropriateness of that setting for you. Our supervisors' time is valuable, and they don't wish to interview multiple students.

If you are interviewing in a setting where the Psychology Department has not sent a student recently, the practicum coordinator has a handout, "Expectations for Placement Settings and Supervisors", that you should take to the interview and give to the person with whom you interview. The interviewer may be the director of the agency or may be the person who will supervise you directly during your practicum (your field supervisor).

In either case, the interviewer probably will be asking you questions and thinking about issues such as these:

- What are this student's interests and goals, and can they be pursued in this setting?
- Will this student dress and behave responsibly and professionally?
- Does this student understand responsibilities of a practicum placement in this setting?
- Is this student suitable for working in our setting?
- What days of the week will the student want to work in our setting?

As an interviewee, you should also have some questions. These may include:

- What are the specific duties I will have here?
- With whom will I be working (supervisor, other staff, and clients)?
- How much independent work will I be expected to perform?
- What will I be able to learn here? Is that what I want to learn in a Practicum?
- What schedule (days and hours per week) are required for me to my Practicum in this setting? (If you must take other classes on campus that semester, find out if that can be accommodated.)
- What is the full name, phone number, and email address of the person with whom I am interviewing?
- What is the full name and mailing address of the setting?

If you are interviewing in a setting where the Psychology Department has not placed a student recently, make sure that you ask your interviewer to send the practicum coordinator a brief (one paragraph) description of your expected duties in the proposed Practicum setting. You will need this description of duties for scheduling the practicum.

This requirement is also described in the practicum coordinator's handout, "Expectations for Placement Settings and Supervisors", but it is your responsibility to mention this in the interview also. The interview in the field setting leads to two decisions:

- Does the setting accept you as a practicum student?
- Do you wish to perform your practicum there?

The interviewer may not be able to tell you whether you are accepted at the time of the interview, and you may wish to think about it yourself. If you are not satisfied with the setting where you interviewed, see the practicum coordinator for another interview to discuss other options. If a setting accepts you, but (at any point in time) you don't choose to perform your practicum there, you must inform both the setting and practicum coordinator of your decision.

Second Interview with Faculty Coordinator

When you have been accepted for Practicum in a setting that is acceptable to you, contact the practicum coordinator (Dr. Leitzel) and inform him of this. He may need to contact the field supervisor or setting to discuss duties, supervision, and evaluation procedures, to assure that your experience will be well-supervised and credit worthy. This is also the time to discuss and finalize your schedule for classes you wish to take other than practicum. Remember you must attend Practicum classes weekly, and that you will have weekly reading and writing assignments for practicum.

Form 509, Copy of Clearance and Scheduling

When the practicum coordinator has approved the setting for your practicum, you are ready to schedule the Practicum course and complete your Practicum plans. This may require an additional meeting with the practicum coordinator. Scheduling is done with the University Form 509, through the MY HUSKY system.

Complete all questions on this form. To complete Form 509, you will need the full name and title of your field supervisor in your Practicum setting, and the full name, address, and phone number of the setting. Form 509 must be accompanied by a written description of your Practicum duties, which you will need to upload in My Husky when you complete the 509 form. If you are performing a Practicum in a setting where we place students frequently, Dr. Leitzel will be able to provide you with a job description.

If you are scheduling a Practicum in a setting where the Psychology Department has not placed students recently, you will not be able to complete Form 509 until we have the job description from your Practicum setting. You may request a copy of this description from the practicum coordinator. At this point, you must also give the practicum coordinator a copy of your criminal background clearance (Pennsylvania or FBI). The practicum coordinator will review and approve the Form 509 and written description of duties followed by the Department chair, Dean, University Internship Office, and Registrar.

After all these offices approve your Practicum, the Registrar will add Psychology Practicum to your class schedule. The day and time of the weekly Practicum meeting (usually 5-8 pm on Thursdays) will also appear there. Check your schedule on My Husky to make sure that the correct number of Practicum credits appears there. This approval process can take up to two to four weeks. If you withdraw from a practicum for any reason, it is your responsibility to contact the setting and your field supervisor, as well as the practicum coordinator.

At last, you're ready to start!

At least one week before the semester begins, contact your practicum setting to arrange your first day of practicum work. You are responsible to begin work in your practicum setting within the first week of the semester, unless your supervisor arranges otherwise. Practicum class meetings begin during the first week of class, even if you have not yet started in your practicum setting. Obtain a copy of the practicum textbook before the first class. You are required to attend all weekly practicum meetings, with one excused absence, unless you are performing your practicum at a significant distance from Bloomsburg. Have a productive and rewarding Practicum!

Sample Practicum Resume

[This is just one format](#); use a different one if you prefer. This resume illustrates many different qualifications; you don't have to have all of these qualifications, experiences, or honors. Omit any category if you don't have important things to put there. See the practicum coordinator if you have any questions.