University of North Texas

PRACTICUM
HANDBOOK

School Library Certification Program

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WELCOME
TO PRACTICUM

What is Practicum?

A practicum is an experience in which a student practices doing a job they are training to learn. You will have the opportunity to work with an experienced school librarian to observe, practice, and apply knowledge that you have read about in your coursework. In the University of North Texas school library certification program, the Practicum experience, and the 160 hours of practice required as a part of that experience, occurs over 2-3 semesters when the student takes INFO 5191 Practicum I, INFO 5192 Practicum II, and INFO 5193 Practicum III.

PRACTICUM
WHY & HOW

**Why are students required to complete a Practicum?**

The state of Texas requires 160 clock hours of time spent in school libraries for students taking coursework to become school librarians. The school library certification program here at UNT adheres to the Texas Administrative Code (19TAC 228.2 and rule 228.35 for all students, whether they reside in or outside of Texas.

Where should the 160 hours of practicum be completed?

The 160 hours should be spent working in at least two levels: primary (Elementary/Intermediate schools) and secondary (Middle/High schools). The state also requires a 70/30 or 60/20/20 time split for the hours. For the 70/30 split, 70% of the 160 clock hours (112 hours) should be spent at one level (Primary or Secondary) and 30% of the 160 clock hours (48 hours) should be spent at the opposite level (Primary or Secondary). For the 60/20/20 split, 60% of the 160 clock hours (96 hours) should be spent at one level (Elementary, Middle, High), and 20% of the 160 clock hours should be spent at each of the other two levels (32 hours at each level or 64 hours altogether).

PRACTICUM BENEFITS

For Students
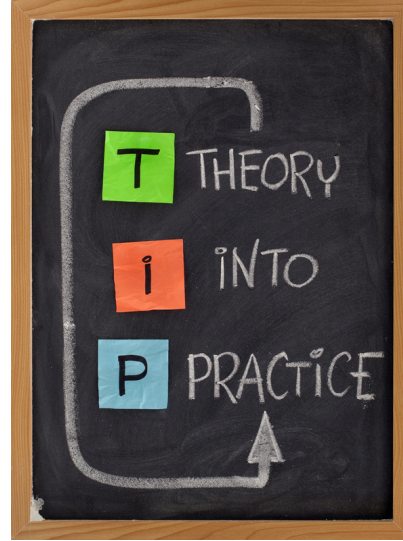
- Allows an opportunity for working collaboratively in the field with supervision from an experienced school librarian
- Provides opportunities to obtain advice and encouragement
- Provides an opportunity to practice what you are learning in coursework
- Allows the student to experience what working in a library will be like
- Provides opportunities to apply course assignments to real-life school libraries
- Offers hands-on experience
- Fosters the ability to form working relationships that can be beneficial in future work
- Provides students with a person who can provide practical experience
- Assists student in transitioning to the next step, working as a librarian
- Allows student to gain needed insight

PRACTICUM
BENEFITS

For Mentors

- Allows an opportunity to help to train a new librarian in best practices
- Provides an extra pair of hands to help finish projects
- Fosters leadership abilities in the mentor
- Reinforces and strengthens knowledge of the school library profession
- Enhances your resume/vita through service to the librarian profession
- Has the potential to expand the Mentor's knowledge of new practices in the field
- Increases sense of fulfillment and personal and professional growth

MENTOR REQUIREMENTS:

According to the State of Texas, the following are required in order to be a mentor for a Practicum student:

- 3+ years as a school library professional
- Certification as a school librarian through an American Library Association (ALA) or Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) approved university school library program
- Currently working as a school librarian in a school library
- A willingness to serve as a role model and a commitment of time and leadership

If there is not a certified school librarian near the student's location, occasional exceptions are possible. Please ask your INFO 5191 Practicum I instructor for more information if you need an exception.

GETTING STARTED

In the introduction module in INFO 5191 Practicum I, there is an assignment with the steps to secure a mentor. After you have a mentor, you can get started earning practicum hours.

1. Access the Practicum Checklist/Timesheet.

2. Make a plan/schedule with your mentor.

3. Add dates and clock hours to your checklist/timesheet as you go.

Students are NOT required to always be able to be seen or supervised in person by the mentor when completing clock hours. For example, when the student visits another library or goes to a conference, they should coordinate through email or by phone conversation or through some other method of correspondence with their mentor, to let the mentor know what tasks they will be completing.

DETAILS...

- **The Checklist/Timesheet will be turned in when the student takes INFO 5193 practicum III**

  Students should track hours and progress on the checklist/timesheet as hours and tasks are completed. This document is aligned with the Texas Administrative Code standards for practicing librarian and preparation programs. It is also aligned with American Association of School Librarian standards. Both the student and the mentor will sign off on the completed checklist/timesheet.

- **3 Formal Observations required**

  UNT hires field supervisors, who are certified and experienced school librarians, to work with students in INFO 5191, 5192, and 5193 to complete these required observations.

- **3 informal observations are required per semester of practicum experience.**

  A UNT field supervisor will work with each student to complete 3 informal observations per semester during the practicum experience. These observations will occur in 5191, 5192, and 5193 as course assignments.

DETAILS CONTINUED...

- **The Mentor will complete a progress report each semester during the practicum experience.**

  A UNT field supervisor will reach out to each mentor once per practicum semester to ask the mentor to complete a progress report about the practicum student. The field supervisor, mentor, and student will also meet virtually one time per semester of practicum.

- **Some Webinar & Conference Attendance CAN count as practicum hours.**

  30 clock hours attending online webinars or an in person conference can count. The content MUST be school library related.

- **Completion and documentation of the 160 hour practicum experience is required to graduate.**

  This requirement is in place for all students whether they reside in Texas or outside of the the state of Texas.

Q&A

✅ **Can the school library practicum be waived if a student is already working as a school librarian before graduation?**

No, the practicum is required for all students. However, students CAN count time spent working in their own library as clock hours. Students working in their own libraries should maintain regular (at least once per week) contact with their mentors to discuss tasks completed as the checklist/timesheet is updated.

✅ **What is a field supervisor?**

The state of Texas requires each student receive coaching as they present lessons throughout the practicum experience from a certified, experienced school librarian. UNT hires several field supervisors to work with students.

✅ **What computer tools/systems will be used during the practicum experience?**

Canvas is used for course management. Watermark is used for document storage and Zoom is used for online meetings.

MORE Q&A

✅ **Are there additional requirements for a student to complete the 3 practicum courses?**

Yes. Each student must complete an electronic portfolio project that the student is introduced to in INFO 5001 School Librarianship. In addition, each in state student must pass the TExES certification exam in order to pass the final INFO 5193 Practicum III course.

✅ **How are the practicum courses graded?**

The three practicum courses are all graded as PASS or FAIL courses.

✅ **Is getting certified as a school librarian a requirement to complete the practicum experience?**

No. However, the steps to take to apply for school library certification will be shared in INFO 5193 Practicum III.

✅ **What are the requirements to become a certified school librarian in the state of Texas?**

1.Two years as an early childhood-12th-grade classroom teacher in a public or accredited private school.
2. A Master's Degree (in most any area).
3. Completion of a state-approved program in librarianship
4. A passing score on the TExES School Librarianship exam (exam administered by the state of Texas).

MORE Q&A

✅ **When will I take the TExES School Librarian Certification exam?**

Each student is required to take the TExES exam as an assignment in INFO 5193 Practicum. Out-of-state students should check with their state to see if exams are required for certification.

✅ **When can I sign up to take the TExES exam?**

At the end of INFO 5192, students will take a practice exam as an assignment. Students who pass the practice exam with a score of 80 or higher are cleared to sign up to take the TExES exam.

✅ **What happens if a student does NOT score 80 or above on the practice exam?**

Students who score below 80 on the practice exam are required to complete a study module in INFO 5193 before they can be cleared to sign up to take the TExES exam.

✅ **Are students ever allowed to take the TExES exam early if there are special circumstances?**

Yes, if you need to take the TExES exam early, please contact the practicum coordinator, Tricia Kuon (tricia.kuon@unt.edu).

MORE Q&A

✅ **Will mentors receive training from UNT regarding the practicum experience?**

Yes. An online training is required for mentors. That training is recorded and will be made available after the mentor is approved and placement with a practicum student is established.

✅ **How is a mentor approved?**

Details for the mentor approval process are shared in INFO 5191. In addition to meeting the state requirements as described on page 8 of this manual, prospective mentors must fill out an <u>application to become a school library mentor</u>.

✅ **What happens if a mentor retires or changes schools during the practicum experience?**

If a student and a mentor can no longer work together, the student can have the current mentor sign off on hours already completed and go through the process to acquire a new mentor. The student does not need to start a new checklist/timesheet.

✅ **If questions about the practicum arise, who should I contact?**

Please contact the practicum instructor by email to ask any questions.

MORE Q&A

✅ **Can hours spent at home doing library work count as practicum hours?**

The only hours not in a school setting that can count as practicum hours are professional development hours which would include online webinars and conferences either online or in person. All other practicum hours must be completed in a school setting.

✅ **How is it possible to work full time and still earn 160 practicum hours in a school library over 2-3 semesters?**

Most students will complete the practicum experience over the course of 9-12 months. For a 12 month experience, the student should plan to spend 13-14 hours per month in a school library, or approximately 3.5 hours per week. Students and mentors should work together to design a schedule that will work best for both. A practicum student recently shared with me that she came 30 minutes before school 3 days per week and one hour after school 2 days per week and came for special events like book fair nights. She took 3 personal days to work in a school library at a different level. She helped at multiple school book fair nights. She also attended TLA once. She earned all 160 hours in one school year.

MORE Q&A

✅ **What are the steps to acquire a mentor?**

In INFO 5191 Practicum I, one of the first assignments will require you to be placed with a mentor. You will only need one mentor, even if you are completing hours in multiple libraries. If your mentor should move, retire, or you need a new mentor for any other reason, please follow these steps to select a mentor and to have them approved by UNT:

1. Many districts in Texas require students seeking mentors to be placed with a mentor by a district library supervisor. To check whether your district is one that requires placement by a library director, please go to your Canvas dashboard and login to the SL Cohort course. Look in the Practicum/Mentor folder and scroll down to see which districts require placement through a particular point person. If your district is not on that list, you should proceed to step 2 below. If your district requires approval or placement by a director, please contact that director and let them know if you have a person in mind that you would like to be your mentor. If you do not have a possible mentor in mind, ask for guidance from the director in choosing a mentor. Library directors are awesome and they will work with you to make this process as convenient as possible. After you and your Library director agree on a mentor for you, please move on to step 5b below.

✅ Steps to acquire a mentor continued...

2. Are you in a district that does NOT require placement through a library director? Do you have a person in mind that you would like to be your school librarian mentor? Here are the requirements for a school librarian to be considered qualified as a mentor:

- 3+ years as a school library professional.
- Certification as a school librarian through an American Library Association (ALA) or the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) approved university school library program.
- Currently working as a school librarian in a school library.

If your district does NOT help with mentor placement and you do NOT have a librarian you know that you would like to be your mentor, you will need to find a librarian in a school that is close to where you live or work to be your mentor. I recommend that you email or call prospective mentors to ask if they would be willing to mentor you.

3. Once you do have a possible mentor in mind, check the UNT approved mentor list to see if the person you want to be your mentor is on the approved list.

4. If the person you want to be your mentor is NOT on the approved mentor list, ask that person to fill out the brief application to become a school library mentor.
It usually takes 24-48 hours for the mentor approval process to be completed.

5. After your mentor is approved to be a mentor by UNT OR by the Library Director of your district (for those districts that require placement by a Library Director as discussed in step 2 above), EVERY student will need to complete the Request a School Library Certification Mentor application. When completing the application, please select the appropriate district from the Designated Contact Person to be Assigned a Mentor.

 5b. If the person you want to be your mentor is already on the approved list, you may go ahead and fill out the request a school library certification mentor form.

6. After receiving your request to be placed with a mentor through the application above, our department manager, Professor Toby Faber, will contact your proposed mentor by email to ask that they confirm that they are willing to become your mentor.

7. After the proposed mentor responds to the email in step 6 with a yes answer, that person is your official mentor. Your mentor will receive an email to confirm the placement. Many mentors use school district email addresses and sometimes those emails are heavily filtered. After your mentor completes the application to become a mentor, please ask them to check their spam/junk email folders in case their welcome email comes to that folder.

TIPS
FOR STUDENTS

- If you work in a school, consider the on-site school librarian to be your mentor
- Always dress and act professionally when you are in a school library to complete practicum hours
- Be sure your Mentor has access to this Practicum Handbook
- Ask your Mentor to meet with you to discuss the Practicum Checklist/Timesheet
- Plan to meet once weekly with your mentor for a few minutes to debrief
- Plan to spend at least 3 hours each week accumulating clock hours beginning in your first semester of coursework when you take INFO 5191
- Be flexible
- Communicate clearly and listen to advice carefully
- Be enthusiastic
- Take initiative
- Be responsible and dependable

TIPS

FOR MENTORS

- If not already approved on the <u>approved mentor list</u>, please apply to become a mentor
- Please respond to district contact regarding being a mentor, if necessary.
- Please respond to student to schedule a first meeting to discuss the student's needs and the mentor's availability
- Please review the Practicum checklist/Timesheet and work with the student to create a plan/schedule for completing the practicum experience.
- Arrange a mutually agreeable time to meet weekly with the practicum student to touch base and ask or answer questions.
- Complete a progress report one time each semester of the practicum experience.
- Interact with the field supervisor once per semester in a scheduled meeting.
- ·Complete the Practicum checklist/Timesheet throughout the practicum process and sign the completed document.

AND SO ARE THESE

LINKS...

◇ Practicum Checklist/Timesheet.

◇ UNT School Library Certification website

◇ School Library Certification Required Course list

◇ School Library Program Advisors

◇ Apply to Become a Mentor

◇ Request a Mentor Application

OUR TEAM

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