



Practicum Manual for Mentors & Students

School Library Certification Program

College of Information

Department of Information Science

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What is Practicum?

A practicum is an experience in which a student gets to observe, practice, and apply knowledge that is being learned in a course of study. In the University of North Texas school library certification program, the Practicum experience, and the hours of practice required as a part of that experience, begins in the first semester of study and continues until the last semester of study which culminates in the student taking the INFO 5090 Practicum course.

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.

Can all 160 hours of Practicum be Completed at one School Library?

The 160 hours should be spent 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).

UNT's school library certification program adheres to the rules set forth in the Texas Administrative Code, which governs educator preparation and certification. Rules concerning practicum requirements for professional certifications can be found in TAC [Rule 228.2 \(Links to an external site.\)](#) and [Rule 228.35 \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

What are benefits of Practicum for students?

- Experience 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

What are benefits of Practicum 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

How do you get started earning your Practicum Hours and what else is required to complete the Practicum?

1. Students must choose a mentor at the beginning of their school library certification program, while taking INFO 5001 School Librarianship, and work with that mentor throughout their program (See LIST of APPROVED MENTORS) If there is a mentor that you would like to work with and their name is not on the approved mentor list, you can ask them to apply to be a mentor. Please **CLICK** on the document name to link to the application that follows: [Apply to Become a School Librarian Mentor](#)

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
 - For more information about the Mentor Role, please [CLICK HERE](#).
2. As previously mentioned, students must spend a **minimum** of 160 clock hours working with their mentors to complete the Practicum Checklist (please see Appendix I)
- Students are NOT required to always be able to be seen or supervised in person by the mentor. 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. The mentor and the student should work together to develop a plan for what tasks on the Practicum checklist will be experienced and where. The mentor should be aware of what the student will be working on but the mentor is NOT required to observe every action of the student for the hours spent doing library work to be counted. It is also allowable for the mentor to send home work with the mentee that can be completed at home or online. Here is a link to information about mentor and student responsibilities with regard to the mentor student relationship: [Student-Mentor Responsibilities Chart](#)
3. While completing coursework and Practicum hours, students will create and maintain an ePortfolio to collect assignments and demonstration of proficiency in meeting the AASL standards. The ePortfolio project will be introduced when students take their first course, INFO 5001 School Librarianship. [CLICK HERE](#) to visit the AASL standards framework pamphlet.

*Master's degree students who began their coursework in the Fall of 2019 and after will use the Canvas site, Community of Information Professionals, to work on their ePortfolio each semester. For both certification-only and Master's students who began their coursework during or after the Fall of 2019, on the Community of Information Professionals site, there are semester checklists to guide what should be completed and when.

4. Students must record their practicum hours and activities (day, time spent, and activity) using a Mentor Timesheet. (see in Appendix II.) Also, [CLICK HERE](#) to see the mentor timesheet document which available on the UNT website.
5. Students must be observed by a UNT Field Supervisor or a designee of the Field Supervisor **three** times during the practicum experience. These observations are called Formal Observations and they will occur during the following courses: INFO 5420 Youth Literature, INFO 5405 Collection Development, and INFO 5090 Practicum.
6. Students must spend time in a 70-30 ratio across at least two of the three levels of libraries or a ratio of 60-20-20 across three levels of libraries elementary, middle, and high school, as the activities and jobs are very different in each of the levels.
7. Attendance at conferences such as TLA or ALA or webinars may be used to complete elements of the Practicum Checklist (Standard 4) and can be documented on the mentor timesheet with approval of the student's mentor. **A maximum of 20 clock hours can be counted through professional development activities.**
8. Mentors and students must sign the Practicum Checklist and the Mentor Timesheet for the practicum to be accepted as complete.
9. Completion of the practicum is a requirement for graduation and certification.

***Students who are already working in school libraries may not waive the Practicum requirement and must choose a mentor, although the actual time spent in the mentor's library may be less than the 160 hours. Contact with the mentor must meet the 160-hour requirement.**

What is required to complete the INFO 5090 Practicum course?

The practicum for school library certification students is an ongoing process that begins with INFO 5001 School Librarianship, the first course in the prescribed sequence of school library program coursework and continues throughout the program of coursework. The practicum experience is completed after students pass INFO 5090 Practicum, the official practicum course, and fulfill the additional requirements of the INFO 5090 Practicum Course:

- ePortfolio (If coursework began before Fall 2019, URL must be emailed to CI-Advising@unt.edu)
 - You will begin your ePortfolio when you are taking INFO 5001 in your first semester of coursework. You should continue to work on your ePortfolio every semester. For Master's degree students, your ePortfolio **MUST** be complete and ready for faculty review the semester **BEFORE** you plan to graduate. For students who began their coursework in the Fall of 2019 or after, the ePortfolio is

your Capstone Project and you must pass it to graduate. For Master's degree students, there will be an ePortfolio review every semester to check your progress. For certification only students, the ePortfolio will not be reviewed every semester. However, during your INFO 5090 Practicum course, your Practicum Instructor will grade your ePortfolio. The ePortfolio is required to pass the INFO 5090 Practicum course.

- Practicum Checklist (must be emailed to IS-SLC-Practicum@unt.edu)
 - Please see Appendix I. The Practicum Checklist is a checklist of activities that you must experience or observe as you log your 160 clock hours of Practicum. The items on the Checklist are designed to help students to experience the 2018 AASL standards in practice. To see the AASL standards framework, please follow this link: <https://standards.aasl.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/AASL-Standards-Framework-for-Learners-pamphlet.pdf>
- Formal Observation which is a face to face conversation, accomplished online via Zoom, with a Field Supervisor. Most of the time, this formal observation will be conducted by your Practicum instructor. This meeting will be completed using Zoom and will be scheduled during the time you are taking your INFO 5090 Practicum course.
 - What is a field supervisor?
 - UNT hires practicing school librarians to help us assess students for the 3 Formal observations required by the state of Texas for completion of the school library coursework. One formal observation takes place in INFO 5405 Collection Development, one takes place in INFO 5420 Youth Literature, and the final observation takes place in INFO 5090 Practicum. The field supervisors MUST be certified as school librarians and they MUST take the state of Texas School Librarian Field Supervisor Training program. Documentation for all Formal Observations is stored in Foliotek.
 - Foliotek is a secure assessment and presentation program supported by the University of North Texas to work in conjunction with Canvas, the course management system used by UNT. Foliotek allows us to store student lesson videos, lesson plans and supporting documents securely as required to meet the State of Texas requirements and to allow students to demonstrate competence and excellence using and applying the School Library Program Standards and Guidelines for Texas as revised in August, 2017. To see the School Library Programs: Standards and Guidelines for Texas, please follow this link:

<https://standards.aasl.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/AASL-Standards-Framework-for-Learners-pamphlet.pdf>

- Mentor Timesheet (must be emailed to IS-SLC-Practicum@unt.edu)
 - The Mentor Timesheet is where you keep track of your clock hours. Every time you complete hours, please log them on your Mentor Timesheet. The Mentor Timesheet can be seen in Appendix II. It also available on the UNT website at the following link:
https://informationscience.unt.edu/sites/default/files/unt_school_librarian_mentor_timesheet.pdf
- Passing score on the TExES certification exam
 - During your INFO 5090 Practicum course, we will study and prepare, as needed, to take the TExES School Library state of Texas certification exam. In the last course before you take INFO 5090, you will take a practice exam. If you pass the practice exam with a score of 80 or higher, you are automatically cleared to sign up for the TExES certification exam. If you score below 80 on the practice exam, you will complete a TExES study module to help you prepare to take the TExES exam.
- The Practicum course is graded as a Pass or Fail course. All requirements must be completed according to rubrics linked to the above “course assignments.”

Tips for a Successful Practicum Experience:

- Read this Practicum Handbook and study all of the information within it
- 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 for practicum hours
- Be sure your Mentor has access this Practicum Handbook
- Ask your Mentor to meet with you to discuss the Practicum Checklist
- With your mentor, design a schedule to help you meet the Practicum Checklist requirements
- Plan to spend at least 2-3 hours each week accumulating clock hours beginning in your first semester of coursework
- Be flexible
- Communicate clearly and listen to advice carefully
- Be enthusiastic
- Take initiative
- Be responsible and dependable

Who to Contact if there are Issues During the Practicum:

Dr. Tricia Kuon, Practicum Coordinator

Email: tricia.kuon@unt.edu

How do I get certified in the state of Texas?:

To be approved for certification through the Texas Education Agency, upon completing the MLIS or certification courses, Texas students must apply for school librarian certification. For more information about the process of applying for school library certification, please follow this link: <https://coe.unt.edu/educator-preparation-office/educator-certification#> (Links to an external site.). In addition to completing the required certification courses, you will be required to provide evidence of the following:

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 (courses taken from the prescribed list must be no more than six years old when the application is made for school library certification).
4. A passing score on the TExES School Librarianship exam (exam administered by the state).

Out of state students must meet certification requirements for their state; a passing score on the Texas state certification exam is waived for out of state students but all other requirements for Practicum must be met.

Applying for Certification and Fingerprinting

When you take INFO 5090 Practicum, there is a module in the course called Extra Stuff. Within that module, there is a link to more information about applying for certification and fingerprinting including a PDF document that is intended to guide students, step-by-step, through the process.

Mentor Responsibilities:

- If not already approved, apply to become a mentor
- Respond to district contact regarding being a mentor

- Respond to student to schedule a first meeting to discuss the student's needs and the mentor's availability
- Review Practicum checklist and student schedule of coursework.
- Make a plan, with the mentee, for addressing the Practicum checklist
- Agree to a schedule that will work for the mentor and the mentee
- Arrange a mutually agreeable schedule for meeting/conversing regularly with the mentee.
- Verify student's record of contact hours which should be logged on the Mentor timesheet as seen in Appendix II and available at the following link:
https://informationscience.unt.edu/sites/default/files/unt_school_librarian_mentor_timesheet.pdf
- Discuss observation of assignments with students to provide coaching, suggestions, encouragement.
- Review completion of the observation and UNT feedback with the student to provide additional insight and encouragement.
- Complete the Practicum checklist throughout the process and sign the completed document; return to the student.

Mentee/Student Responsibilities:

- Initiate contact with a district contact for mentor placement if a district contact is in place for the ISD.
- Initiate contact with mentor, either identified by the district contact or identified through other contacts and research.
- Share Practicum checklist and education requirements with mentor:
 - School library certification only
 - Master's Degree with school library certification
 - Schedule of required coursework

- Arrange a mutually agreeable schedule for meeting/conversing regularly with the mentor.
- Contact may include, but is not restricted to:
 - Email (counts for 15-30 minutes)
 - Phone conversations
 - Skype or Zoom/GoToTraining interactions
 - Personal interface in the library
- Record contact hours and hours spent at scheduled school library related events in your Mentor Timesheet.
- Maintain the count of hours and communicate these to the mentor monthly so there is agreement when the total required hours are met.
- Ensure that the Practicum checklist is complete and submit to mentor for final signature
- Submit the completed Practicum Checklist and Mentor Timesheet

Do you need Assistance Finding a Mentor?

Check out the UNT approved mentor list at the following link:

<https://informationscience.unt.edu/approved-mentor-list>

Appendix I Practicum Student Task Checklist:

The Learner and Learning:

Develop and teach a lesson in the library (1.1)



(The lesson should be developmentally appropriate for the audience, engage the students' interests, and incorporate curriculum to demonstrate adherence to National School Library Standards. The lesson should also include a technology component which could follow the main lesson to enhance or extend the learning. (3.3)

Blog Entry: Learner Diversity and Learning Differences (1.2, 1.3)



(In two paragraphs, answer the following two questions regarding the library in which you are collecting your practicum hours: 1. How have you displayed inclusiveness, cultural competence, or a support of individual and group perspectives during your practicum hours? 2. What changes could you make to the library to make it more accessible to people with special needs?

Develop a makerspace activity to accompany a lesson and arrange an area in the library for the activity to occur. The lesson could be one that the candidate teaches or one that the mentor teaches (1.4)



Add book talks or book trailers to your electronic portfolio as artifacts. (1.4)



Planning for Instruction:

Collaborate with a teacher to design a learning activity to accompany one of the teacher's lessons. The activity could incorporate technology, a maker activity, how to search the library catalog, use of databases, etc. The activity should integrate library resources that stimulate inquiry and allow students to explore information. (2.1)(5.2)



Candidates practice interacting with individual students and groups of students in the following ways (2.2, 2.3):



- Search the library catalog and evaluate results
- Discuss the importance of digital citizenship (3.3)
- Research topics and evaluate the results
- Search databases for information and evaluate information found

- Candidates develop 3 methods to assess what the students learned in the above activities. Include a blog post in your ePortfolio describing the 3 methods used to assess student learning (2.4)

Knowledge and Application of Content:

- Reader's Advisory: Candidates interact regularly with students to help match the student with a book they would like to read. (3.1)

- Candidate develops a strategy to motivate and engage or engender enthusiasm for reading among students. Examples: booktalks, book trailers, reading clubs, reading programs like Reading Olympics or Reading Bingo, and anything else the candidate and mentor can think of to get kids excited about reading. (3.1)

- Candidate learns to use the following tools (3.2):

- Titlewave
- District's budget system (can just be a demonstration of how it works)

Library's Automation system:

to check in and out books

to catalog books

to run circulation reports

to make overdue notices

to inventory books

to run a collection analysis

Library's Databases

Library's online search catalog

Scholastic Catalog & Book Fair toolkit for Librarians

Organization and Access:

Blog Entry in ePortfolio: Access to Library Resources
(Problem Solve and Brainstorm: Make a bulleted list of 7-10 solutions you come up with to address physical, social, virtual, economic, geographic, and intellectual barriers to equitable access to the library's resources and services?) (4.1)



Candidate should (4.2):



Weed a section of books as designated by mentor using the CREW method



Evaluate the collection using a Collection Analysis report



Design a list of books that could address a need of the school from the Collection Analysis report along with an analysis of the community/school's needs



In designing the list, every book should have 2 recommended reviews from reputable selection tools (ex. School Library Journal, Booklist, Book Links, Hornbook, Kirkus, etc.)



The books on the list should be age appropriate



The bindings chosen should be library appropriate





Candidate should run a circulation report and determine what data the report provides that can help to isolate areas of need in the student population. For instance, does the report show that some groups of students under-served? (4.3)

Leadership, Advocacy, and Professional Responsibility:




Candidate should develop a lesson/professional development for teachers that would meet a need in the school community. This professional development could be delivered in person with a group of teachers in an after-school or in-school meeting. The professional development could also be delivered online through a module developed by the candidate. (5.1)

 Candidate should attend a district librarian meeting OR a state or regional school library conference. (5.3)

 ePortfolio Blog Entry: Ethical Practice

(In your practicum, how have you promoted or modeled ethical practices as expressed in the American Library Association Code of Ethics and the Library Bill of Rights?) (5.4)

 Other Tasks to Complete:

- Check in and out books to students
- Order library supplies
- Request books from other schools
- Repair a damaged book
- Create a book display
- Shelve books
- Update the library webpage
- Post updates to the Library's social media pages
- Assist with author visit (either in person or virtually)
- Assist with parent volunteer management
- Assist with development of Summer Reading list
- Reorganize shelves if needed
- Create a mock or real library budget
- Promote library services (in print and online)
- Help to keep the library clean and organized
- Build bibliographies to assist teachers with curriculum needs
- Pull books for teachers
- Survey the students about books that they want
- Meet with administrator for a mock interview
- Build a list of websites and apps for teachers to assist with curriculum needs
- Assist with a book fair (set up, running the fair, take down, financial documents)
- Participate in an after-school library sponsored club or Family night

