LIS 620: Field Project in Library and Information Agencies

Guidelines For Practicum Supervisors

Thank you very much for agreeing to serve as a practicum supervisor for a student in the UW-Madison Information School (iSchool) practicum course, LIS 620: Field Project in Library and Information Agencies. The following guidelines have been designed to help you work effectively with the practicum student. The expectation is that this will be a professional experience that is challenging for the student and a benefit to your institution.

Student Objectives for the LIS 620 Course
Through a course taught by UW-Madison faculty and instructional staff, the student should be able to meet the following objectives:

- Link theory with practice.
- Reflect on what they have learned through the practicum.
- Work effectively as a professional in an information agency.
- Build a professional network.
- Communicate effectively at a professional level.
- Articulate their contribution to the field project site.

Course Content
The student participates in an online course (LIS 620), while working 120 hours at the practicum site. The provides relevant professional background and an opportunity for students to reflect on their experiences and provide feedback to their fellow students regarding their experiences by:

- Drafting learning objectives for the placement;
- Journaling or written reflection on the field experience;
- Posting to an online class discussion board, including reading, annotating, and sharing journal articles relevant to their placements;
- Participating in online and/or face to face class meetings;
- Writing a research paper related to one of their projects at the site, that includes a literature review; and
- Presenting a poster on their experiences at the end of the semester, either virtually or face to face

Fulfillment of these academic requirements is the responsibility of the student, who will be evaluated by the LIS 620 UW-Madison instructor.
The Practicum Process

(1) Interviewing the Student

You will be contacted by the student with a request for an interview. Just like any other job interview, this interview is the opportunity for you and the student to decide if the practicum will be a good fit for both of you. Please try to make time to meet as soon as you are contacted so that another practicum can be arranged should yours not work out. It is the student’s responsibility to notify the UW-Madison instructor if the interview is successful.

(2) Field Project Agreement

Working with the course instructor, the student will draft objectives for the practicum. The Field Project Agreement form includes space for associating activities with each objective. This is where you can be the most helpful, since you will be aware of the types of work onsite that the student can undertake. This document is designed to help the student associate work onsite with their own objectives for the course. Both of you should agree to the document, and the student will submit it to the instructor for final approval. At the end of the course, the student will use the form to conduct a self-evaluation on the achievement of each objective, and hand the form in to the UW-Madison instructor.

(3) Beginning the practicum

Tour: Before the student begins work, make sure that s/he is given a tour of the library or information agency. 
Introductions: Introduce the student to all staff members with whom s/he will interact.
Work Rules: Make sure that the student knows what rules govern attendance, breaks, use of phones, etc.
Meetings: If at all possible, please allow the student to attend at least one business meeting, such as a committee, institutional unit, or the institution itself.
Administration: In some sessions of the course, students will be asked to arrange at least one meeting with upper management of the institution. For example, department manager, unit director, library director, etc. This can be done by phone for practicums that consist of remote work.

(4) Concluding the practicum:

You are asked to provide feedback on the practicum in several ways:

- Practicum Supervisors Survey - you will be sent a link to an online survey during the last few weeks of the practicum. This survey includes a set of questions to allow you to provide feedback on the practicum. You are encouraged to share the survey link with any other staff at your organization who have spent a significant amount of time working with the student, so that they can contribute their feedback as well.
- Site visits – you will be contacted to arrange a site visit with the instructor near the end of the placement. This should be arranged at a time that is convenient for both you and the
student. This visit will be conducted either virtually or face to face. If this is a remote practicum, the site visit will be done by telephone, Skype, or other synchronous, virtual means. If the site visit is face to face, the instructor will meet with both you and the student, and if possible observe a program the student has worked on. This is an opportunity for you, the student, and the practicum instructor to meet and discuss the outcomes of the placement as a group, including reviewing the student’s self-evaluated objectives. If you desire a confidential meeting with the instructor, that too may be arranged.

- You are not responsible for grading the student.

Questions and Concerns

If you have any questions about your role in the field experience or the performance of the student, don’t hesitate to contact the student’s faculty supervisor via email. Depending on the semester, this will be either Allison Kaplan (agkaplan@wisc.edu) or Debra Shapiro (dsshapiro@wisc.edu). If you are unsure, feel free to contact both of us.

Thank you again for agreeing to provide this valuable experience for our students.

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