

INTERNAL POLICY

Applied Research Practicum Doctoral Program

DESCRIPTION

The practicum takes place over two university terms and shall include at least 450 hours in a practice setting, combined with other academic activities (meetings with thesis supervisor and thesis committee, theoretical and conceptual readings). The objective is to produce an applied research project related to the practice setting, including the problematization, theorization and the elaboration of research questions. In some cases, students will propose methodological devices or articulate reflections around methodological devices already in place in the practice setting.

The practicum will conclude with the drafting of a practicum report, which must be submitted to, and orally defend before, the thesis committee. Depending on the practicum situation, students will have three options in drafting the practicum report (see point 7 below). The practicum will allow students to deepen their knowledge of social work theories, practices and policies. Note that students engaged in a practicum are not required to sit the comprehensive examination, which is replaced by the practicum report. In terms of a normal academic path, the practicum generally starts at [the beginning of the student's third term of doctoral studies](#).

The practicum must be related to the student's thesis topic.

Given that this is not a practical training internship, students will not be allowed to conduct interventions as social work interns in a practice setting.

General goal of the practicum

The primary goal of the practicum is to help train social work researchers to be at the forefront of social work theories, practices and policies, and acquire advanced knowledge on how these theories, practices and policies are related in a practical setting and on their issues.

Moreover, by allowing students to conduct a practicum at the doctoral level, the School of Social Work aims to assist students in building and maintaining networks in practice settings during their doctoral studies.

Specific goals

Through the practicum

- a) students will become more familiar with the relationship between applied research and intervention in social work
- b) students will develop and demonstrate their theoretical and conceptual knowledge in social work and the social sciences by pursuing an applied research project
- c) students will deepen their knowledge of service organization, and of the social policies and practices, that apply to their thesis topic.

PROCESS

1. Students who intend to complete an applied research practicum must discuss this option with their thesis supervisor as soon as possible. These initial discussions regarding the practicum should take place during the first term of the doctorate, and no later than the start of the term prior to the practicum.
2. The student and the thesis supervisor must agree on the possibility of conducting a practicum. The student is responsible for identifying the practice setting with the support and approval of the thesis supervisor. In terms of discussions about the practicum, the student is responsible for liaising between the thesis supervisor, the contact in the practice setting, and themselves.
3. The practice setting must be identified and a general project must be defined at least six weeks before the start of the practicum. The student then fills out the “Practicum Proposal” form by specifying the practicum setting, the name and title of the contact person in this setting, as well as the title and a brief description of the intended project. This form must be signed by the student, the thesis supervisor, the contact person in the practice setting, and the supervisor of graduate studies, and then must be submitted to the School secretariat.
4. Afterwards, the student will consult the thesis supervisor and the practice setting to prepare a practicum plan (3-to-5 pages excluding bibliography). This plan will include a description of the student’s activities, the time during which the student will be present in the practice setting, an explanation of how the activities relate to the goals of the applied research practicum (see above), a timetable, and a preliminary bibliography of proposed theoretical and conceptual readings. Note that the contact person must approve the project plan before the practicum begins.
5. Four weeks before the start of the practicum, the student will send the practicum plan to the thesis supervisor, who must forward it to the thesis committee members. The thesis committee then has one week to ask for changes or additions to the project. Once the student receives the committee’s comments, he or she has one week to submit the final version of the practicum plan, which must then be approved by the thesis committee before the student begins the practicum. The approved practicum plan must be sent to the School secretariat by the thesis supervisor, who must attach the “Practicum Proposal” form.

6. Having successfully completed the mandatory courses (namely SVS 7501, SVS 7502, SVS 7590) and an elective course, the student can officially enrol in the Practicum (SVS 9901). **To receive credit for the practicum, the student must simultaneously be enrolled in the Comprehensive Examination (SVS 9997).** Although this double enrolment is mandatory, note that the student completing a practicum will not need to sit the comprehensive examination, which is replaced by the practicum report (see next point).
7. The entire practicum takes place over two university terms. At least six weeks before the [end of the second term of enrolment in the practicum](#), the student must submit a practicum report to the thesis supervisor. This report will be 60-to-70 pages, double-spaced, and approximately 20,000 words. It will contain the following elements, depending on the particulars of the practicum:

A. When the practicum aims to develop an applied research project, the practicum report must include:

- a description of the activities conducted;
- a research problem related to the aim of the proposed applied research project (including a literature review, a structured and in-depth theoretical discussion on the applied research topic, a theoretical and conceptual framework, and the research questions);
- a summary of the methodology
- a synthesis of the lesson learned, presented as a problem-centred reflection that takes into account the practice setting.

B. When a student enrolls in a practicum as part of an applied research project already in place in a practice setting, the practicum report must include:

- a description of the activities conducted;
- a research problem related to topic of the applied research (including a literature review, a structured and in-depth theoretical discussion of the applied research topic, a theoretical and conceptual framework, and the research questions);
- a discussion of the methodology and, if possible, of the analysis of the results;
- a synthesis of the lessons learned, presented as a problem-based reflection that takes into account the practice setting.

C. If no applied research can be conducted in the practice setting, the practicum report must include:

- a description of the activities conducted;

- a problem-based synthesis of the learning opportunities conducted during the practicum, based on a literature review and structure theoretical framework. This synthesis may deal with a specific problem addressed in the practice setting in which the student is conducting the practicum (e.g. homelessness, mental health, poverty, violence, etc.) or on specific practices (e.g., a given program, the implementation of new practices, etc.);
 - a problem-based discussion of the environment in which the practicum takes place, based on an advanced and critical theoretical review of the social and/or institutional issues and policies that affect the practice. For example, this discussion could deal with new public management of social work and its influence on social worker practices, or with immigration policies and their impact on the clients of a help centre for immigrants.
 - The identification of research questions and a brief description of the methodology that could be used to answer such questions.
8. The thesis supervisor promptly sends the practicum report, along with the online form entitled “Thesis Committee Evaluation of the Practicum report”, to each member of the thesis committee. The thesis supervisor also sends a copy of the practicum report to the contact person in the practice setting; although this individual does not evaluate the report or project, they must be invited to attend the defence.
 9. The members of the thesis committee (including the thesis supervisor) then have at most four weeks to evaluate the report based on the goals of an applied research practicum. The evaluation is based on the goals stated in the first section of this document and depends on the type of practicum (see 7A, 7B or 7C) and the practicum research project approved by the thesis committee. The completed form must be sent to the thesis supervisor. The student and the thesis supervisor must be granted a reasonable amount of time to review the evaluators’ written comments before the defence of the practicum report is held.

A mark of “P” means “satisfactory for defence”, while a mark of “F” means “unsatisfactory for defence”. If two or more members of the thesis committee mark the report as unsatisfactory, the report will be considered unsuitable for defence. In this case, the student will be allowed to rewrite and resubmit the practicum report, but only once and this resubmission must take place during the term following receipt of the initial unsatisfactory mark. The rewritten report must take into account the comments and criticisms the thesis committee made about the initial report. If two or more committee members assign a mark of “F” to the resubmitted report, the student has failed the practicum and will be asked to withdraw from the program.

*In the case of co-supervision, the two co-supervisors’ comments and criticism are considered equal to those of a single committee member.

10. During the evaluation period, the thesis supervisor is responsible for contacting the thesis committee members, the contact person in the practice setting, and the student to set a date and time for the defence of the practicum report. Once this date and time have been set (no later than the end of term stated in the University calendar), the thesis supervisor will ask the School secretariat to reserve a room.

11. The defence

Unless the student has asked for a public defence, the only people allowed to attend the defence of the practicum report are the student, the thesis committee members and the contact person from the practice setting. The thesis supervisor chairs the defence, which follows the steps outlined below:

- First, the student will take 20-to-25 minutes to briefly present the report
- Next, the student will answer questions asked by the thesis committee members and the contact person from the practice setting
- Finally, the thesis committee will ask the student to leave while the committee deliberates.

VERDICTS:

A) If the committee members are generally satisfied with the practicum report (even if it could benefit from minor changes), the report is **accepted**. After deliberating, the committee members will come to an agreement on the comments and suggestions that the student will need to take into account when working on the thesis.

B) If a single committee member feels that the practicum report is unsatisfactory, the report will be accepted, but the dissenting evaluator will explain his or her objections and the committee members will need to clearly agree on, and state, which concerns the student will need to address, to their satisfaction, when pursuing the thesis.

C) If two or more committee members agree that the practicum report does not meet the requirements of the program, the student will need to rewrite the report and conduct a second defence before the end of the following term. If the second attempt receives a mark of unsatisfactory ("F"), the student will have failed the practicum and will be asked to withdraw from the program.

Once the committee members have taken a decision on the verdict and agreed to the comments, suggestions or concerns that the student will need to address when pursuing the doctoral thesis, the thesis supervisor and committee members will sign the online form called Defence of the Practicum Report.

The student is then called back into the committee room and the thesis supervisor, as chair of the proceedings, describes the results of the committee's deliberations to the student, and the defence is complete.

After the defence, the **thesis supervisor** submits the signed form, along with the attached comments and recommendations, to the School secretariat, who enters the final mark for SVS 9997 (verdicts A and B = mark of "P", for satisfactory; verdict C = mark of "F", for unsatisfactory.)

IMPORTANT:

If the student fails the oral or written part of the practicum, the student is allowed only one second attempt, which must take place no later than the end of the following term. If the student fails the second attempt, the student will be asked to withdraw from the program.

The entire process (practicum report, defence and, if necessary, rewriting due to revision requests or failure of the defence) cannot exceed three terms of enrolment in the practicum.

Policy approved at the departmental assembly held on January 17, 2017