SOWO 912: Research Practicum

The Research Practicum is three credit hours, which translates into 12 contact hours per week in one semester. Typically, students complete this course in the fourth semester of course work; they should have completed the first three semesters of the doctoral program before beginning the Research Practicum. If students develop a research practicum in conjunction with a research assistantship for which they are being paid, they are expected to spend twelve non-paid hours per week on the research practicum. With appropriate approval, students may tailor this practicum to their capacities and career goals, but they may not exempt it.

The intent of the Research Practicum is to prepare graduates for research performance and productivity. Students learn and practice the skills involved in various phases of the research process, first through apprenticeships to experienced researchers and later by initiating their own projects. These skills include development of research questions and methods; analysis and interpretation of data; application of findings; proposal writing; and preparation of scholarly publications. Potential settings include faculty research projects, agency-based projects, and university-community collaborations. Methods may be qualitative or quantitative or both. Possible projects include instrument development, secondary analysis of data, community needs assessment, program evaluation, and large-scale surveys. Preparation of a literature review alone is not a sufficient research practicum project. Students are responsible for ethical conduct of research, as elaborated in the Graduate School Handbook (http://handbook.unc.edu/phd.html). Unless there is prior sanction for a project, all students must secure approval from the University Institutional Review Board before initiating a practicum dealing with human subjects.

Students document the process and their findings in a final product, which may include a manuscript – or a substantial portion of a manuscript (such as the methods or results section) – for publication, or in another suitable format approved by the research practicum Advisor.
**Research Practicum Objectives**

When developing their research practicum proposals, students clarify how they will use the opportunity to achieve some of the following objectives:

a) Build skills for research on social interventions;

b) Develop competencies for initiating and carrying out agency-based research in a mode of collaboration with practitioners;

c) Carry out developmental or preparatory steps of the dissertation project;

d) Add to their understanding of the complete research process;

e) Develop skills in writing for publication and presenting in professional forums

Students will achieve these objectives through engaging in some or all of the following activities in connection with an original or an existing research project:

a) Collaborate with other researchers and/or practitioners in the design and implementation of the research project;

b) Formulate research questions of theoretical and practical significance;

c) Design the overall research strategy for answering the research questions;

d) Develop appropriate data collection strategies;

e) Plan the data analysis;

f) Consider issues of diversity and discrimination in formulating the research questions and designing the study;

g) Describe the planned study in a complete research proposal;

h) Carry out the proposed data collection and analysis;

i) Interpret findings and discuss their implications for theory and practice;

j) Write up findings in one or more publishable articles.

The student should talk with the faculty about possible sites for the practicum and the breadth, depth, and type of research experience needed based on prior training and experience and career goals.
Guidelines

Timing and Prerequisites for the Research Practicum

Under normal circumstances, students will complete the research practicum in the fourth semester of coursework. While we will consider other reasonable plans, we encourage following this sequence in order to gain the benefits of peer interaction, and integration with coursework.

Students should have completed the first three semesters of the doctoral program before beginning the research practicum.

Prerequisites:
SoWo 900 Conceptualizing Social Problems to Inform Interventions
SoWo 910 Research Methods in Social Interventions
SoWo 911 Social Statistics and Data Analysis (unless exempted)
SoWo 914 Measurement in Social Intervention Research
SoWo 918 Regression and other data analysis courses
SoWo 919 Qualitative Analysis

Credit Hours and Contact Hours

The research practicum is 3 credit hours, which translates into 12 contact hours per week for three credit hours in one semester.

Types of Research Practica

The specific character of the research practicum should depend on the student's background and training needs, career objectives, the availability of suitable research projects, and special conditions at the time the internship is undertaken. For students with prior research experience, the research practicum should provide for an expansion of research skills into new areas and/or a deepening of pre-existing skills.

Possible Settings

- Individual faculty research projects, especially university-community collaborations
- Agency based projects

If students develop their research practicum in conjunction with a research assistantship for which they are being paid, they are still expected to spend twelve non-paid hours per week on the research practicum.
Possible Types of Projects

Methods used in the practicum may be qualitative or quantitative, or a combination of both. Examples of possible types of projects include:

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<tr>
<th>Instrument Development</th>
<th>Participant Observation in an Agency or Community</th>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary Analysis of Qualitative or Quantitative Data</td>
<td>Qualitative Data Collection Regarding a Specific Intervention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Needs Assessments</td>
<td>Focus Groups as a Needs Assessment or Project Planning Tool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Evaluation Design and/or Execution</td>
<td>Ethnographic Interviews</td>
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<td>Large Scale Surveys</td>
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Students will initiate contact and negotiate the research practicum with their practicum supervisor in accordance with program criteria. Using the appropriate form (U:\Groups\Doctoral\Forms\Forms), students will submit a brief proposal which should include:

- Identification of the research problem
- The research activities the student will engage in
- Methodological procedures to be employed
- Anticipated product - including specification of the article title and journal to which the student might submit an article, which can be co-authored (if final product is an article)
- A discussion of how the proposed project meets the criteria and achieves the objectives for the research practicum

The supervising faculty member or on-site supervisor (if this person is not the supervising faculty member) must approve the written proposal before the student may register for this course. The supervising faculty member and/or on-site research supervisor, and the student, sign the Research Practicum Agreement, keep copies, and give a copy to the Doctoral Program Coordinator for the student’s file.
Supervision and Evaluation

The student, with faculty advisor, will identify an experienced researcher to supervise the practicum.

The responsibilities of the practicum supervisor are to: (1) review and approve the proposal; (2) meet regularly to review progress; and (3) evaluate the work in process or completed. The practicum supervisor will meet with the student as needed, to assess progress and congruence of the actual work with practicum criteria and objectives and the student's own learning objectives. The grade will be assigned by the practicum supervisor.

Guidelines for Intellectual Ownership

Students should discuss and negotiate intellectual ownership, that is, who controls and whose name is on, any published products from the research practicum. A statement regarding the outcome of this discussion should be included in the proposal for the practicum.

Human Subjects Requirements

In situations in which students are dealing directly with human subjects, they will need to secure Institutional Review Board clearance of their project, unless it is part of a larger project which already has IRB approval. IRB approval should be secured during the semester prior to initiating the practicum.
Students use this form to plan their Research Practicum. When approved, it is to be signed and dated, and a copy given to the Doctoral Program Assistant to be placed in the student's folder in the Doctoral Program Office.

Student's Name: ________________________________________________________________

The written proposal for the Research Practicum must be approved by the supervising faculty member or on-site supervisor. Some details of the proposal can be completed during the beginning of the Research Practicum.

1. What are your specific learning objectives in terms of research skills that you will gain from this practicum?

2. Describe the setting for the practicum and why you selected it.

3. What is the research problem/question on which the practicum will focus?

4. What methodology or methodologies will you employ?

5. What specific tasks will you carry out?
6. What product or products do you plan to complete by the end of the practicum (e.g. tested instrument, publishable paper*, proposal, meaningful portion of another product)? If published, who will the likely author or authors be, and in what order?

7. How does the proposed project achieve the objectives for the practicum?

8. When do you anticipate completing your Research Practicum? __________________________ (date)

It is understood that the SOWO 912 is 3 credit hours, which translates into 12 contact hours per week (not necessarily all of which will be on-site). In proposing the project, student and supervisor should take these time limits into account when delineating the scope of the project.

Approved:___________________________________________________

On-site supervisor                                             (date)

Research Supervisor (if other than on-site supervisor)               (date)

Student                                                                                         (date)

Doctoral Program Chair                                                               (date

* You are not required to have submitted a publishable paper in order to get a grade for your practicum.