

**SUPERVISED FIELDWORK
MLIS 7960**

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY
MASTER OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROGRAM
DECEMBER 4, 2001
Revised February 26, 2004**

Course Description

3 credit hours. Prerequisite: MLIS 7000 and consent of instructor. Grading is on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. A minimum of 120 hours in an approved library or information center. Learning objectives that are specific to the individual student's interests and goals will be identified collaboratively by the student, the on-site supervisor, and the instructor.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Discuss the application of theory to practice as demonstrated by the service activities at the fieldwork site.
2. Identify the relevance of content from other coursework to the service activities at the fieldwork site.
3. Describe the effect of the fieldwork experience on their career interests and plans.
4. Evaluate the value of the fieldwork experience to their professional preparation.

Role of Supervised Fieldwork

Supervised fieldwork is an elective course designed to provide a "real world" learning experience in an area of the individual student's professional interest. Normally taken toward the end of the student's coursework, fieldwork provides an opportunity to see how the theories covered in classes can be applied. In addition, the opportunity to gain practical experience and professional connections can make a significant difference in a student's employability and preparation for a successful transition to the professional role. This experience may be especially valuable to the student who has never worked in a library or information center or to one who wishes to enter a new area of the field.

Three Players: Student, Fieldwork Coordinator, Site Supervisor

The **student** is responsible for securing the agreement of his or her academic advisor, contacting the fieldwork coordinator at least a semester in advance, for articulating an area of interest and desired learning outcomes, and for cooperating with the fieldwork coordinator and site supervisor in the negotiation and completion of the fieldwork experience.

The **fieldwork coordinator** serves as the instructor for the course and as the “lead negotiator” of the fieldwork agreement. After conferring with the student and clarifying goals, the coordinator will identify an appropriate site and supervisor and will guide the agreements for the student’s experience. The coordinator is responsible for approving the site, based on the qualifications of the supervisor, applicability of the site to the student’s goals, and scheduling compatibility.

The student must spend at least 120 hours in the fieldwork site during the semester. Scheduling compatibility between the student and the site supervisor is required in order for the site to be approved. In addition, an approved site must provide an environment and resources that are consistent with the student’s educational goals.

A site affiliated with the student’s workplace will be approved only if the supervisor and fieldwork activities are outside the student’s usual duties. The fieldwork course is intended to acquaint the student with new knowledge and will ordinarily not be tied to the student’s regular compensated employment.

Most fieldworks are unpaid. The student may receive both credit and monetary compensation for the fieldwork hours if the site offers compensation. If the student is to be paid, financial arrangements must be documented ahead of time as part of the goals document.

The **site supervisor** has primary responsibility for the student in the workplace. A site supervisor must hold an ALA-accredited Masters degree or equivalent professional preparation and must have held the current post for at least a year. The supervisor must be willing and able to provide learning experiences consistent with graduate course credit and to confer with the student regularly.

The site supervisor will identify and schedule activities that are consistent with the student’s educational goals. The supervisor may place the student under other professionals’ supervision during the fieldwork, if appropriate in regard to the duties assigned.

The fieldwork coordinator is responsible for reviewing the site supervisor’s qualifications and for selecting a supervisor whose background and capabilities are appropriate in relationship to the student’s goals. In addition, the coordinator should make an informed judgment as to the ability of the potential supervisor to provide a professional-level educational experience for the student, considering such factors as the supervisor’s expressed intentions for the student, the supervisor’s workload, and the supervisor’s autonomy within the workplace environment. The fieldwork

coordinator will look for evidence that the site supervisor understands that “the student is there to learn as well as work.”¹

The site supervisor will secure institutional permission for the fieldwork to occur, including consultation with the appropriate administrator. The fieldwork coordinator will assist in this effort if requested.

Procedures

Student (at least one semester prior to the fieldwork semester):

- Secure advisor’s consent
- Prepare a resume
- Identify an area of interest
- Outline educational goals for the fieldwork and put them on paper
- Schedule a consultation, in-person or virtually, with fieldwork coordinator

At the meeting

- Discuss interest and goals
- Outline time availability
- Identify preferred sites and/or geographic locations

Fieldwork supervisor

- Contact potential site supervisors
- Identify supervisor’s qualifications
- Discuss students’ goals and identify compatibility
- Ascertain scheduling compatibility
- Select site and supervisor
- Give site and supervisor’s contact information to the student

Student

- Schedule in-person meeting with site supervisor

Student and Site Supervisor

- At the meeting:
 - Identify schedule
 - Discuss goals document
 - Record weekly schedule of activities, keyed to educational goals

Site Supervisor

- Sign off on weekly schedule of activities

¹ Association for Library and Information Science Education, “Guidelines for Practices and Principles in the Design, Operation, and Evaluation of Student Field Experiences,” *ALISE Position Papers*, 14 October 1990, http://www.alise.org/nondiscuss/assoc_position_statement_field_experiences.htm (13 November 2001).

Student

Adhere to schedule
Cooperate with site supervisor and others in the workplace
Submit biweekly log to fieldwork coordinator
Consult with supervisor and coordinator as needed
Submit culminating paper to fieldwork coordinator

Fieldwork coordinator

Consult with student and site supervisor as needed
Visit the site at least once
Consult with supervisor at end of fieldwork
Review biweekly logs and culminating paper
Assign grade

Site supervisor

Consult with student regularly
Provide constructive feedback
Contact fieldwork coordinator with any problems or questions
Provide an evaluation to the coordinator at the end of the fieldwork

Elements to be included in the student's final paper

- a summary of the fieldwork, based on the goals document, the weekly schedule of events, and the biweekly logs;
- description of the library or information center, including details about its mission and goals;
- information about the administrative organization, resources, and services offered;
- Reflective discussion of the role which the library or information center plays in serving its constituency;
- Commentary on knowledge gained and the expected effect on the student's professional development