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Information For Emergency Certified Students Who Are Completing a Field Experience

If you are enrolling in Field Experience through Professional Development Studies, this document contains the information you should know in order to successfully complete the experience and get the most out of it.

Description

Field Experience, course number 17:611:592 (3 credits), generally involves supervised professional work in a school library media center working under the direction of a certified librarian. Since you are already working in a school library, we will structure the experience around your current employment. You will be working with both a supervisor/mentor who is a certified librarian and a faculty adviser. Coursework includes a minimum of 150 hours of work, keeping a journal of the experience as well as issues to be explored, attendance at meetings with the faculty adviser, and a brief summary paper. Students cannot enroll in Field Experience unless they have successfully completed at least 12 credits of course work. Arrangements must be made with the Professional Development Studies office early in the preceding term.

Course Objectives

1. To provide general professional orientation and skills development through supervised field experience in a library setting appropriate for each student, with directed practice work and observation in a representative range of functional areas (reference and information services, library skills instruction, materials selection and acquisitions, cataloging and other technical services, etc.) and activities.
2. To broaden the student's perspective and background for improved assimilation and synthesis of general principles and concepts.
3. To acquaint the student with the mission, administrative organization, policies and procedures, resources and services, and clientele of a particular library system which can serve as an example of its kind and also as a general reference model.
4. To expose the student to working contacts with individual professional librarians; to facilitate the assimilation of professional attitudes and work habits; to acquaint the student with different points of view and a variety of approaches in dealing with problems and responding to service needs.
5. To provide the student with a minimum base of practical experience and with evaluations of his or her performance during this experience which may be referenced in support of applications for subsequent professional appointments.
6. To evaluate the student with regard to appropriate and relevant personal and professional factors, such as general education, professional knowledge and competence, ability to work with others, diligence in the accomplishment of assigned tasks, etc.

Students will be required to demonstrate the ability to synthesize theory and practice; to analyze the sponsoring agency's program of service in terms of its goals and objectives and its clientele; and to re-examine career goals in light of the experience.

Organization of the Experience

Field experience requires a minimum of 150 hours to be completed within a single semester. Obviously since you are already working in a school library this will not be a problem. During the semester you should plan to speak with your supervisor/mentor at least once per week to discuss what work you are doing and how you are doing it, to solicit advice, and to discuss issues. You must plan to visit your supervisor/mentor's library several times during the semester to participate in some activities (classes, faculty meetings, etc.) We hope you will also be able to arrange for the supervisor/mentor to visit you at your library.

The experience should integrate what you have learned in coursework with your particular library or media center. The following activities should be incorporated into the experience:

- reviewing the goals of the school or library
- reviewing the objectives of the media center or library
- daily operating procedures
- reading promotion activities
- instructing in library and information skills
- working with teachers to integrate the curriculum
- reviewing written policies (selection policy, etc.)
- evaluating, acquiring, maintaining the various types of media and information technology
- considering the staffing situation
- considering the facility plan
- participating in school functions such as faculty meetings

You are the one chiefly responsible for determining what you want to learn and how you will learn it within the constraints of the particular situation in which you will be working. It is worth taking some time to think this through as you begin the Field Experience.

Major Assignments

(1) The major assignment of Field Experience is to complete your 150 hours of work.

(2) Students must keep a journal to record their learning experience, and submit it periodically to the faculty adviser. It is important to keep a journal because the act of recording and reflecting on what you observe enriches your learning. As you write down what happened on a particular day, you may recall questions that you had that could not be asked at the moment they occurred to you: make a note so that you can ask your supervisor or faculty adviser later. You may realize that something you observed jars with your understanding of how things should be: write about that, so that you can try to understand it. You may remember an incident that was particularly illustrative of a common problem: record it, so that you can share this with other students on the listserv. Don't worry about polished writing in the journal – just get your thoughts down! As you go along, you will find it useful to turn back to early entries to see what progress you have made, and what questions you still need to answer. In general, use the journal to help you to think as clearly as you can about what you are doing and seeing, and how that relates to what you are gaining from classes, readings, and other experiences. Finally, ask how your insights affect your ideas about your future in the profession. And, most importantly, enjoy!

(3) During the semester you will participate in a listserv with other students who are engaged in Field Experience. Please use this opportunity to describe your library and your school and to share questions that come up during the experience.

(4) Students must submit a paper at the completion of the field experience that should:

- describe your school library media center in terms of its goals and objectives, the community of users it serves, its relationship to its "parent" body and to other agencies and/or institutions, and its governance,
- offer your analysis of problem areas and strengths of your school library media center,
- summarize the knowledge and skills you acquired during the semester,
- raise issues that you would like to explore further.

The final paper can be brief if you have been keeping and submitting your journal conscientiously. You need not repeat what has been explained in the journal or during meetings with the faculty adviser. The purpose of the paper is to have you take time to reflect on the experience as a whole, to ask yourself what were the key things you learned, to relate what you learned in the field to what you learned in class (and elsewhere), and to assess the impact of the experience on your thinking about your future career direction.

One way to give focus to your paper is to focus on a change you would like to make in the school library. Why would you want to make that change? Who would have to be involved? What resources would you need and how would you get them? Usually, answering these questions requires you to draw many of the things you have learned. Another approach that makes sense sometimes is to compare your site with another library that you are familiar with.

Students assigned special projects also may submit a copy of the project report. In addition, students are required to participate in individual conferences with the adviser, and to read whatever is assigned by the site supervisor or adviser.

Methods of Assessment

The supervising librarian and faculty adviser will both evaluate your performance. The final assessment will be made by the instructor, based on the supervisor's input, your journal and paper, and discussion with you. A pass/fail grade will be assigned based on your completion of the required hours and assignments.

The Mechanics

The Professional Development Studies office will confirm with you before the semester begins both the site and the supervisor for your field experience. We will also introduce you to the faculty adviser with whom you will be in contact all semester.

Please be sure to

- Let the faculty adviser know when you are starting your hours and what you will be doing.
- Find out from the faculty adviser how often to submit your journals and in what form. (Often this is done after completion of about 20, 40, 60, 85, 115, and 150 hours; for those who are completing hours in a more concentrated time period, more frequent submissions may be desirable.)
- Keep a log of your time, usually done as part of the journal.
- Attend staff meetings, if at all possible. Take every opportunity to observe and analyze how decisions are made. Know written policy, and observe what policy is implemented in practice.

At the end of the semester you should arrange an exit interview with your supervising librarian to clear up any questions that you have about policy, administration, and larger issues. This kind of encounter can help you to crystallize what you have learned, and to put it in perspective. Procedural and personality-related matters should not enter into these discussions. The exit interview may, when

appropriate, give you the opportunity to ask permission to use the supervisor as a reference as you look for employment.

Rutgers asks the supervisor to complete a brief feedback form about your performance from their point of view.