

EL Practicum Information for Practicum Instructors

***Please contact the EL Office if you are adding a practicum, so that the course can be advertised through the EL website and in the registrar's schedule of classes during pre-enrollment**

1) What is a practicum course?

A practicum course is a 2- credit letter- graded course that provides students the opportunity to engage in their coursework further by participating in an EL course component that complements a base course.

What are the most basic student requirements of a practicum course?

Students are required to:

- Meet in 1-hour weekly sessions to master new material and to engage in reflection
- Participate in at least 3 additional weekly hours of hands- on learning
- Complete assignments tailored to their practicum

Student may be asked to:

- Share their practicum experience with students in the larger base course
- Present their practicum experience and work at the spring Experiential Learning Symposium

A practicum can be:

- 1) A 2-credit course linked to one or more 4-credit base courses (Students must be enrolled in a 4- credit base course in order to enroll in an associated 2-credit practicum option).

Advantage: A. students who want to get a more 'hands- on' understanding of course material have the chance to work intimately with their practicum instructor and a smaller dedicated group of students. B. Not all students can take 2 additional credits in a semester. Thus, making a practicum optional gives students who would like to enroll the opportunity to do so without limiting others from the base course.

- 2) A 6-credit course (equivalent to a 4-credit+2-credit course) where all students must complete 6-credits worth of work. The practical component is engrained in the traditional course work. These courses are sometimes community- engaged learning (CEL) courses where students use what they learn in their coursework to directly effect change in the community.

Advantage: All students who sign up for the course participate in an integrated EL structure. Four-credit courses that becomes 6-credit courses must go through the new course approval process.

2) How to get started: Here are some key questions to think about when deciding to add a practicum component to a base course.

As a course:

- What is the goal of the practicum course?
- Does the practicum material relate directly to the base course?
- Will the practicum provide students with a more in depth understanding of the base course material?
- Should the practicum have a CEL component? Or, should the practicum require students to work with a community organization /business?

As a base course/ practicum instructor:

-How would you like to be involved in the facilitation of the practicum?

- Base course faculty have the option of:
 - A. Fully facilitating the practicum course component

- B. Collaborating with another faculty/ staff/ adjunct instructor
- C. Selecting a graduate student teaching fellow/ undergraduate Peer Assistant (PA) who has already taken the base course with which the practicum is associated

Other logistics to think about:

- There may be a need to cap the enrollment in the practicum course (ie, if a partnering organization can only take on 7 volunteers or an in- depth research project is limited to 4 students)
 - If enrollment is limited to a certain number of spots, often instructors will utilize a brief application process through which they ask students what EL courses/ opportunities they have taken advantage of in the past, what leadership experience they have, what skills (including relevant language skills) they are able to contribute, etc.
 - Determine whether you feel that the practicum opportunity is suitable for first year students. Or, determine if there is a certain level of course material understanding/ personal maturity needed to be able to participate in the practicum regardless of class year.
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3) What are the base-course faculty member responsibilities?

- Report the addition/ continuation of the practicum to the registrar/ EL Office no later than a week before pre-enrollment the semester before the practicum is being offered
- *Please contact the EL Office if you are adding a practicum, so that the course can be advertised through the EL website and the complete EL course listings during pre-enrollment**
- Announce the practicum and its goals/assignments in the base course syllabus. The announcement should also include the weekly meeting time/ place for practicum participants
- Attend at least one (or more) practicum sections during the semester to assist students with connecting their EL experiences back to the 4- credit base course through reflection
- Be available during your regularly scheduled office hours to discuss base course/ practicum connections

If a faculty member is not facilitating a practicum directly, they are asked to:

- Provide support for practicum facilitator/ instructors or PAs by staying in regular communication (suggested weekly check-ins)
 - Review instructor feedback on written assignments (PAs should not provide grades on assignments except under special permission of the faculty member/ staff. Click on <http://www.brandeis.edu/das/downloads/FormforInstructorsSupervisingUndergraduateTeachingAssistantswithGradingResponsibilities1.pdf> for more information about PA grading)
 - Attend final presentations/review final work of students in the practicum. Some instructors ask practicum students to briefly present their work to the entire base course class
 - Assign and enter the letter grade for the practicum through sage
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4) Information about Peer Assistantships (PA), if a PA will be leading the practicum.

- PAs must have already taken the base course associated with a practicum course before becoming a PA for an associated practicum (for newly approved 4- credit base courses that offer a practicum, special permission of the base course instructor must be given)

PAs:

- Support faculty by leading weekly discussion sessions to facilitate students' reflection of their hands-on experience connected to the course syllabus. The base course instructor may wish to suggest discussion topics
- Assist faculty with reviewing students' assignments and providing feedback to encourage deeper understandings of core course material
- Facilitate and provide support for students' community projects, logistics, and administrative tasks such as CORI forms (if necessary)

- Work with faculty to develop creative ways to connect the course theory with practice through assignments or discussion topics
 - Maintain communication with course instructor to ensure success of practicum, discussing any problems or successes that may arise
 - Receive 4- 'for credit only' credits upon completion of peer assistantship, if they register for a PEER 94a course (add form available on the Registrar's website)
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5) How to establish a community partnership for an EL practicum.

- Some faculty members/practicum instructors may have an already established community partner/organization relationship that they want to utilize in their practicum courses. Others may know what type of organization they want to partner with, but not have contact information, etc.
- The EL Office as well as the Department of Community Service can facilitate these connections
- Some partnering organizations may already have student programs/ positions that practicum course students could easily fill (some organizations are always looking for a set type of volunteering that could align with the base course work)
- If the community partner does not have a formalized student program with position descriptions for students, a more meaningful student experience can be created through a mutually agreed upon EL description and set of supervision expectations.

Working with the partnering organization.

- The most essential component of working with community partners is to understand that they rely on practicum students to complete designated work that has real world impact on the organizations
- Fluid communication between the partnering organization, the practicum instructor, and the practicum students is essential

Community partners have asked practicum instructors for:

- A copy of the course and practicum syllabus including the EL Student Contract or learning agreement, if applicable
 - The Brandeis academic calendar for the term
 - Names and contact information of the practicum leaders (cell phone number and e-mail address)
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6) Devising a learning agreement.

A learning agreement is optional, but a good practice.

The learning agreement can be designed by the faculty member/ student/ PA to establish general desired learning goals for the semester. It is often created by the faculty member and attached to the practicum add form students must submit to enroll in a practicum course.

Individual goal setting: At the start of the semester, the practicum instructor may wish to ask students to write down 3-4 individual learning goals that they would like to work towards through their practicum course work. These goals can be re-checked and reflected upon throughout the semester.

Setting goals when working with a community partner: Students who are working with community partners should also work with their individual supervisors to establish mutually agreed upon expectations and goals, which should be shared with the practicum instructor.

7) Reflection Resources

Reflection, one of the key components of the EL process, is challenging. Here are a few resources to inspire dynamic meaningful reflection. Please use and share with PAs as well. More faculty reflection resources to come.

To explore the Experiential Learning “Toolkit,” please visit below and click “Toolkit”:

<http://www.brandeis.edu/experientiallearning/forfaculty/index.html>

John Dewey Project on Progressive Education/ University of Vermont: Facilitating Reflection

http://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/reflection_manual/

Campus Compact Reflection Guide:

<http://www.compact.org/disciplines/reflection/structuring/>

University of Minnesota: Reflection

<http://www.servicelearning.umn.edu/crimson/dependencies/multimedia/reflection1.pdf>

Youth Service California: A Conscious Guide to Reflection:

<http://mnaadmin.mnaonline.org/CMDocs/MCC/Resources/Reflection/Reflection%20Methods%20for%20Your%20Learning%20Style--Youth%20Service%20California.pdf>

8) EL Transportation Options

- Free Zipcar Use

Zipcar has granted EL a \$5,500 grant to facilitate transportation to EL and CEL sites.

Students have easy access to cars by the hour, day or even overnight. Gas and insurance are included, so please take advantage.

Sign up for free and you can start using Zipcar for all your department-related driving on and off campus!

Visit <http://www.zipcar.com/apply/?account%5fid=641126555> to “join my department's existing Zipcar account.”

If you have questions, please email Zipcar at depthelp@zipcar.com and Caitlin Abber'13, program assistant for EL, at cabber@brandeis.edu

- Free EL Van Use

There is an EL Van, located in Tower Lot, that may be used to transport up to (12) students.

To reserve the EL Van, email Lexi Kriss at akriss@brandeis.edu

*The driver must be Bran-Van certified and must read and comply with the additional Guidelines and Procedures posted: LINK upon receiving confirmation of EL Van use.

** Please see following pages for more detailed van use information.

Experiential Learning Van Use Information

Van Procedures:

- Pick up the KEY to the van prior to departure.
- Complete the Van Maintenance Report.
- **Return KEY at promptly to the Experiential Learning Office. If it is past office hours, please drop off by 10am the following business day. This is not negotiable.**
- ONLY use the van confirmed in this email for your project, parked in the *Tower Lot* and return to the *Tower Lot*. Park towards the back of the lot and be sure to park as straight as possible.

- Vans must be picked up and returned in the time frame indicated above. Other groups are dependent upon your punctuality.
- Return the Van with the same amount gas (regular unleaded) as when you left campus unless this is an approved regular program use.
- Verify that Emergency Brake is OFF before operating the van and back on whenever you park the vehicle.
- Verify that all doors are locked and interior and exterior lights are off before returning the van.
- Return the van as clean as or cleaner than you left.
- Show up EARLY to pick up your van if following a snow storm as you may have to shovel and clean off the van prior to departure.

Van Use Guidelines:

- You must be a University certified Van Driver to operate this vehicle.
- You CANNOT use personal FastLanes transponders in the vans. If you do, Brandeis will be billed \$50 and you will be responsible for this charge.
- Sometimes the keys stick in the vans. If they do you, need to wiggle/shake the steering wheel until the keys come out.
- Carry a cell phone for EMERGENCY USE or confirm that someone in the van has one that is fully charged.
- The number of people must be equivalent to the number of seat belts in the van (12).
- Only transport Brandeis University Faculty, Staff and Students in this van.
- If you encounter a problem with the van upon return please email experiential@brandeis.edu

*Reminder that use of this vehicle is a privilege and that you are representing Brandeis University at all times. Please adhere to all policies and guidelines indicated in this email.

Non Emergency Contacts Monday-Friday 9am-5pm:

Lexi Kriss

781-736-2697

In case of an EMERGENCY contact:

BRANDEIS POLICE

781-736-3333

WALTHAM POLICE, FIRE, EMERGENCY

911

BRANDEIS POLICE, (non-emergency)

781-736-5000

Thank you,
Experiential Learning Office
Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences