

Practicum in Art History
Graduate and Undergraduate
Supervisor's Handbook

2016-2017

The Carleton University Art History Practicum

The practicum course is an integral component of Carleton University's Art History program. Many graduate and upper-level undergraduate students gain valuable training accomplishing work on projects for arts institutions and organizations in the Ottawa area. The Carleton University Art History practicum has been remarkably successful thanks to the strength of our partnerships with institutions throughout the National Capital region.

This handbook has been created to help you, whether you have been a valued participant in our practicum program for many years, or are considering joining us for the first time, to design, administer and evaluate practicum projects that will be of benefit to your institution and to the training of advanced students in the Carleton Art History program.

The practicum student

A practicum student is either an undergraduate student of high standing at the third or fourth year of a B.A. program in Art History or a graduate student in the MA program in Art History: Art and its Institutions. They are dedicated students who are interested in applying the knowledge they have acquired in their Art History program and in learning new skills in the professional environment of an art institution or organization. Many of them are thinking of or are working towards a professional career related to their field.

What skills can they bring to the job?

Undergraduate students. Undergraduate students come with a minimum of two years in a B.A. program with a major in Art History or the History and Theory of Architecture. They have completed a survey of art history, as well as more specialized courses covering different geographical areas, periods, and issues in art history and its methodologies. They are required to take courses in modern and pre-modern art, Canadian, Aboriginal and non-western art. They have been completing research papers averaging 10 pages, they have taken slide and essay exams, and have developed a level of competence in visual analysis, critical thought, specialist language, as well as reading and writing skills. Students who apply for a practicum course in their fourth year have more experience, particularly in developing critical thought, visual and textual analysis, academic writing skills, and the methodologies

of art history. To be eligible for the practicum course, students must have maintained a grade point average of 9.5 or B+ in their art history courses.

Graduate Students. Most graduate students take a practicum course in the first year of their MA program. Most of them have completed undergraduate programs in Art History at universities from across Ontario and Canada, or, if they enter the MA in Art History from an undergraduate program in another field, they have been required to take a minimum of one year of art history courses chosen in consultation with the Graduate Supervisor (a Qualifying Year). These students have made the commitment to a professional training in Art History and come with high standing in their undergraduate degrees.

All practicum students. Particular skill sets will vary greatly from student to student, depending on their previous experience, job history and aptitude. The practicum project form you fill out allows you to state your desiderata of the skills a practicum student should have to successfully complete your project. You will have the opportunity to assess the appropriateness of candidates in an interview process at the beginning of the term.

What constitutes a successful practicum project?

The terms of a practicum project will vary considerably depending on the your institutional activities, needs and resources. That said, a successful project will be one that

- matches requirements for successful completion of the project with the skill sets and time commitment of the student,
- has clear objectives and access to appropriate resources
- provides appropriate supervision
- coordinates expectations of the professional organization with the expectations and objectives of the Art History department for academic content.

Some things to consider when designing a practicum course

Objectives of the practicum project should be clearly stated. What do you expect to have accomplished at the end of the practicum term? What research areas and resources will the student be engaging?

Appropriate supervision Arts institutions and organizations are typically underfunded and staff are overcommitted. A practicum student can help an organization get research done that otherwise would be either left undone or further burden busy staff. The successful completion of the required work, however, needs a realistic allocation of time to supervision of the student: introducing her/him to the organization and to the resources both material and human she/he is to work with, supplying models to emulate, and being available for questions and direction. If a supervisor is expecting to be frequently off-site, who will be apprised of the project and designated as co-supervisor of the project to cover absences and assure the smooth completion of the project? Who will be in a position to best evaluate the student's work and be available at the end of the term to make out the evaluation form for the university?

Academic expectations We ask our institutional partners to identify projects that provide for research-based written work at the end of the term. The mandates and practices of arts institutions are not the same as those of the university; the practicum works on the basis of their complementarity. Predominantly clerical and/or ad hoc tasks reactive to the daily pressures felt by all busy arts organizations are a great help to the institution, but less likely to be satisfactory for the practicum's educational objectives. That said, the academic criteria for successful practica can be fulfilled in ways that are responsive to the activities and demands of the particular institution.

Term paper topics We ask the institutional supervisor - as the individual most familiar with the project and resources available to the student - to help advise the student on a term paper topic. This section will attempt to clarify the bridging of practicum work and academic expectations necessary. What I expect from the students is a paper that arises out of their practicum work, uses the resources available to them on site, and, with some extra research, forms this into a paper that contextualizes a topic of focus in a broader way.

The difficulty in making more specific statements as to what the term paper should be arises out of the varied nature of our practicum placements and the variables of student interest. Graduate students working on clear research projects have less difficulty than

undergraduates whose work may not be that clearly focused. That said some general suggestions follow:

- If the practicum work involves research on a discrete and well-defined topic or material, the term paper may clearly be a case of writing up the research in a discursive form, with the proper references and bibliography. Part of this shaping will involve establishing a thesis and often additional research to support it.
- Papers may address the institution and its practices in a wider context, for example a consideration of the role of archives in the creation of national identity and memory, the function and activities of artist-run centres, or the practices and challenges of exhibition, ideally taking as a case study the work the student has been involved in the practicum.
- The paper may take a project that has a large scope - e.g. writing bios of 100 artists or short descriptions of 100 artworks for an institutional website – and pick out one or more artists to research more fully for a paper.
- The paper may take a project that has a very focused scope – e.g. the fonds of a particular artist – and put that artist into a larger contextual setting of time, place, artistic milieu, or theoretical considerations.
- A paper for a practicum that involves a wide range of activities – in a smaller institution, for example – may come out of the student's engagement with certain artists, certain kinds of artistic output, and / or the very processes and practices of the institution seen as a whole.
- Occasionally written work produced for the practicum can be submitted as full or partial fulfillment of the term paper requirement. If substantive written work has been produced for the practicum, this option can be discussed with the Art History practicum supervisor.

All practicum students are expected to set up an appointment with the Art History practicum supervisor at midterm to discuss the appropriateness and shaping of their paper topic.

Projects for graduate students Projects for graduate students must identify a distinct body of research material and focused objectives. The practicum should be designed with the student's academic requirement for the production of written research at the end of the term as a prime consideration. The student may well be required to accomplish a variety of tasks during the course of the term; these tasks should give the student experience in the professional practices and activities of the placement without substantially displacing the student from the primary practicum project and its research objectives.

Many graduate students enroll in two semesters of practicum work (i.e. September-December and January-April). If they will be continuing in the same institution working on a continuation of the project begun in the Fall, students will be asked to submit a proposal for a paper to be handed in at the end of the Spring term with a summary of the work done so far, due by the December assignment date on the Schedule of Important dates (below).

Projects for undergraduate students Generally, undergraduate practica fall under one of two categories: practica engaged with a discrete project, and more 'exploratory' placements that give the student experience in the diversity of an institution's practices and tasks. Strong undergraduates can successfully complete a sophisticated research project; often their tasks situate their 'apprenticeship' at a more rudimentary level. The great variety in the experience and capabilities of these students make attention to the interview process and flexibility during the course of the practicum particularly appropriate.

Appropriate work Filing office correspondence and cleaning a back room, while very necessary to an organization, does not constitute an appropriate practicum project, while organizing a database for archival fonds, writing descriptions of artworks, or helping with the organization of an exhibition may well be. Because each practicum student must present an end-of-term paper, the student must be given access to resources that can be used towards an effective term paper, the possibilities of which should be discussed with the student upon her or his engagement.

If there are any questions about appropriate practica and/or practicum papers, please feel free to contact the Art History Practicum Supervisor, Stéphane Roy.

The Job Placement process

How many students will be sent to be interviewed?

We try to match your project with the most appropriate student; if the match seems good, we will send just one student. You have the option of interviewing more. When more than one student is particularly keen and well suited to your project, we will likely send them to interview competitively. The student(s) you see may or may not be applying to more than one position.

We ask that both students and interviewers make clear whether they are interviewing more than one potential employer/practicum student.

What is the likelihood of getting a practicum student for your project?

You have a project that is begging to be done, and you have put in a proposal for a practicum student. How likely are you to get that position filled?

The answer will vary from year to year, depending on the pool of students relative to that of our practicum proposals. In the case of graduate students, we make special efforts to get a good match between a student's area of concentration, career goals and practicum, so the appeal of your project very much depends on the makeup of the incoming class.

It does happen that a suitable match cannot be found for a given project. In that case, we may ask that you consider whether a project offered in the Fall can be reoffered in the Winter, or whether a project for a graduate student may be reconfigured for an undergraduate or vice versa. If in the end, a practicum student cannot be found who can fill the requirements of the project, we do hope that you will consider submitting a project proposal for the summer months, or for the following academic year.

Administration of the Practicum

1. The first step is to fill out the accompanying project proposal form.

2. Interview. Students will contact the institutional supervisors by telephone, as indicated on the project proposal form. A time for an interview will be arranged that is mutually agreeable.
3. Proposal form or “contract”. At the end of a successful interview, this form is to be filled out by the institutional supervisor and the student, stating the practicum project, the student's duties, and the resources to be made available to them. This form asks for the subject of the written work – the academic component – that the student will undertake for their end-of-term submission to the Art History Practicum Supervisor. At this stage a general topic should be arrived at, which may be the results of research on a particular fond or body of primary material, a report contextualizing a project or activities engaged during the practicum, an examination of some aspect of the institution in a larger context, or a combination thereof. One of our expectations is that the institutional supervisor will advise the student on appropriate topics, and aid in the development toward the final written work. A paper proposal will be submitted to the Art History Practicum Supervisor at mid-term.
4. Final evaluation due at end of term (see schedule of important dates appended)

Student evaluation

75% of the students' final grade will be based on their daily work at your institution. You will be receiving an evaluation form towards the end of the semester requesting your feedback. We appreciate your prompt response to the grade forms in order to register the students' semester grades in a timely fashion.

25% of their final grade will be based on written work submitted to and graded by the Art History Practicum Supervisor (Prof. Stéphane Roy). This consists of a daily work journal and a research paper. Undergraduate research papers are 8-10 pages in length; graduate papers are 12-15 pages in length.

Work hours of a practicum student

Graduate students: 1.5 days per week for 12 weeks or about 144 hours

Undergraduate students: 1 day per week for 12 weeks or about 96 hours

Setting up a work schedule

The days and times students are available for work are restricted by class and work schedules. The interview is the time to ascertain whether a mutually agreeable work schedule can be worked out.

There are a number of demands for student time that may call for a certain degree of flexibility. We ask that religious holiday requirements be discussed at the outset, and we appreciate your accommodation. Exam weeks, final assignments, presentations may make particularly pressing demands on the practicum student. While not required, flexibility to work around the most arduous of these periods may be requested.

Contact Information

Please do not hesitate to contact the Art History Practicum Supervisor with any questions, comments or concerns regarding the practicum course.

Art History Practicum Supervisor

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CARLETON UNIVERSITY ART HISTORY PRACTICUM DATES
2016-2017 Schedule of Important Dates

FALL TERM

Late August through September 20 (last day for Fall term add/drop)

Interviews with Art History Practicum Supervisor, Stéphane Roy. Please email Prof. Roy for appointment: stephane.roy@carleton.ca

September 7

Term begins

By September 20

Students will have been informed of their prospective placements. Students are to contact the on-site supervisor to set up an interview.

By October 1st

Students to have begun work at their practicum.

October 17

Proposal due for final paper for single-term projects.

October 20-21

Mid-term meeting with Prof. Roy, Practicum Supervisor.

October 24-28: Fall break

Classes not held. You may work at your practicum. Be sure to make arrangements with your on-site supervisor if this is a scheduled working day and you plan to be away.

November 21

Proposals due for practica continuing the same project Fall and Winter.

December 9

Final papers for single-term practica, and work journals for all practicum students to be submitted. Please note: late papers will not be accepted.

WINTER TERM**January 5**

Winter term begins

January 19 (last day for Winter term add/drop)

Interviews with Prof. Roy for Winter term practica. Please email Prof. Roy for an appointment.

By January 30

Students to have begun work at their practicum.

February 6

Proposal due for term paper for students starting at a practicum institution in January.

February 9-10

Midterm meetings with Art History Practicum Supervisor.

February 20-24: Winter break

Practicum suspended unless alternative arrangements are made by request of the student with the institutional Practicum Supervisor.

April 7

Term paper and work journal due. This is the University Senate deadline for handing in assignments.