

INTRODUCTION TO PRACTICUM IN PSYCHOLOGY (PSYC 5903/6903)

Note: Registration will not be permitted and Practicum activities cannot begin until all required documentation has been received and approved by the Department of Psychology. Therefore, it is essential that you review the *Student-Agency Contract and Insurance Documentation* section that appears below.

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of Practicum in Psychology (PSYC 5903/6903) is to provide graduate students with the opportunity to combine their academic studies with experience in an applied environment. Under supervision, students apply psychology in settings primarily outside of the university, such as a community agency, hospital, government department, or other organizations within Ontario. The practicum includes a mandatory research component. Our MA and PhD programs are experimental in nature; therefore, the expected research component for the practicum exceeds 50%. Along the way, students will be cultivating their professional skills, making contacts, and becoming more engaged with the career planning process. However, the success of individual placements depends on student initiative and on the support and guidance from professionals in the community.

THE PLACEMENT

With the graduate-level Practicum, each student is expected to spend a minimum of 160 hours (approximately 13 hours per week) volunteering at the supporting agency during the summer, fall, or winter term. There is some flexibility in terms of start and completion dates within a semester. For example, if students want to double up hours in May and June in order to be free in July and August, this can be done, provided it is acceptable to the Placement Supervisor.

Students in the course are covered by Carleton University liability insurance only when registered for the course. Therefore, students can't complete any part of the Practicum hours outside of the term for which they are registered. Note that students can register only once for the Practicum. If Practicum hours are completed outside of the registered term, students will receive a grade of “unsatisfactory” and will not receive credit for the course.

It is the responsibility of the student to locate a placement and this should be accomplished as soon as possible. A list of some [potential placements](#) appears on the departmental website.

Students are welcome to propose placements within Ontario that do not appear on this list. Either way, all placements must be reviewed and approved by the Department of Psychology. Please note the following: 1) the more popular placements fill-up quickly, and 2) many placements have special requirements (e.g., police check, immunizations, etc.) that must be satisfied prior to the commencement of placement activities. Some of these requirements can take several weeks to satisfy and may result in additional financial costs. Make sure that you communicate with the agency and understand all of the requirements and costs in advance. Please note that students are unable to secure a placement at an agency where they are a paid employee.

The Department of Psychology normally prefers that students be supervised by an individual who holds a PhD in Psychology. Please identify the credentials of your potential supervisor on the *Student-Agency Contract*.

THE STUDENT-AGENCY CONTRACT AND INSURANCE DOCUMENTATION

A number of documents must be completed and forwarded to the Practicum Coordinator:

1. **The Student-Agency Contract (completed by Student and Placement Supervisor).** The Contract should outline the student's learning objectives, describe duties and tasks during placement, indicate the days and times of work, and specify methods of supervision and evaluation. Learning objectives should be established that reflect the student's learning needs as they relate to their assigned responsibilities at the agency. These objectives are to be specific and measurable and will be used to evaluate progress throughout the placement. While completing the Contract with the Placement Supervisor, students should remember the skills they hope to acquire and refine. Clearly, a goal is to make the most of this unique experience and this should be reflected in the Contract. The [Student-Agency Contract](#) is available via the departmental website.
2. **Student Declaration of Understanding (completed by Student).** This form outlines the insurance coverage that is provided to students and includes a declaration that students understand this coverage and the obligation to report any workplace injuries to the employer and the University. It is available here: [Student Declaration of Understanding](#).
3. **Letter to Placement Employers (completed by Placement Supervisor).** This form outlines the process for determining insurance coverage and includes a declaration acknowledging the responsibility to provide a safe environment, adequate supervision, and to report any workplace injuries to the University. It is available here: [Letter to Placement Employers](#).

4. **Safety Orientation Checklist (completed by Placement Supervisor).** This form lists a number of basic health and safety awareness items (e.g., emergency procedures) that must be addressed. It is available here: [Safety Orientation Checklist](#). The Safety Orientation Checklist may be submitted one week into the term of the practicum.

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all documentation has been forwarded to the Practicum Coordinator. Registration will not be permitted and Practicum activities cannot begin until all documentation has been received and approved by the Department of Psychology. Documents should be submitted to the Department of Psychology electronically, practicumpsychology@cunet.carleton.ca.

Aim to have all documentation submitted well in advance of the following deadlines:

- Summer 2026: April 22nd
- Fall 2026: August 26th
- Winter 2027: December 16th

Note: Please complete all forms in Adobe Acrobat or Reader, or similar. Otherwise, they may be blank.

MANDATORY RESEARCH COMPONENT

Placements must include a research component. Research that is part of a Practicum placement must be distinct from other graduate research such as an independent study, thesis or dissertation and must be guided by the Placement Supervisor, and not a Carleton faculty member.

Placements include research that is a) separate from program evaluation that is part of the organization's mandate, and b) includes activities such as participant recruitment, data collection, and entry and coding of non-anonymous data, must receive advance ethics approval from the [Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychological Research](#). Ethics approval from Carleton is required even for research projects that have already received ethics approval from the placement (e.g., Ottawa Hospital Research Ethics Board). Note that Carleton ethics approval may take several weeks, so students are encouraged to consult with the Department of Psychology as soon as possible in order to determine the necessary ethics requirements.

In the event that a research proposal, literature review or similar activity forms a component of the evaluation process, evidence of the completion of such work is required to be on file with the Department of Psychology. Such evidence does not apply to reports where the confidentiality of individual records needs to be preserved.

EVALUATION

It is expected that students will meet on a regular basis with their Placement Supervisor. At the end of term, the Placement Supervisor will be providing the Department of Psychology with a completed [Field Evaluation Form](#). The deadlines for submission are included on the form. Note that Practicum in Psychology does not include an in-class component. Students will receive a grade of satisfactory or unsatisfactory. This course cannot be repeated for credit.