

Department of Psychology
Doctoral Student Teaching Practicum

PSYC 6114

Overview

The purpose of the Mentored Teaching Practicum is to provide doctoral students who have an interest in developing their teaching skills with the opportunity for mentored, practical teaching experience within psychology. The Mentored Teaching Practicum will be offered as PSYC 6114, Teaching Practicum. The course cannot be repeated for credit. The pre-requisite for the Teaching Practicum is the completion of PSYC 6104, Seminar in University Teaching, or the completion of one of these two programs offered by Teaching and Learning Services (TLS): the [Preparing to Teach Certificate](#) or the [Certificate in University Teaching program](#). In select cases, students may be able to complete one of these courses concurrently with PSYC 6114, subject to the approval of the Graduate Supervisor. Please note that the Teaching Practicum is most suited to upper-year doctoral students that have defended their prospectus.

In addition to developing appropriate teaching skills, participants of the Teaching Practicum will be able to document this teaching experience as part of their teaching dossier or curriculum vitae for job applications. This will include student teaching evaluations. Letters of reference from the teaching mentor will be provided on request to support the students' applications for employment.

Any full-time faculty member or instructor (but, normally not a contract instructor) in the department of psychology is eligible to be a teaching mentor. Students who are accepted into the Teaching Practicum will have the opportunity to co-teach under the teaching mentor's supervision. This mentored co-teaching experience will be carefully scaffolded, such that the doctoral-student's responsibilities increase over the course of the term to build on the student's growing competence. In each case, a Teaching Practicum Learning Contract will be completed by the student and the teaching mentor and submitted to the Graduate Supervisor. The Graduate Supervisor will review the contract for possible revision and approval.

Each of the components of the Teaching Practicum is described in this document, including the:

1. learning objectives
2. selection process for doctoral students
3. selection process for teaching-mentors
4. expectations of the Teaching Practicum Learning Contract
5. announcement of Teaching Practicum student
6. expectations of teaching-mentors

1. Learning Objectives

Many doctoral students in the Department of Psychology seek employment in the academic sector (college or university). These jobs will typically involve some degree of teaching, yet there are no courses currently on offer in Psychology that allow students to develop teaching skills. The proposed course is meant to prepare these students for such employment opportunities by allowing them to develop practical teaching skills. Although learning objectives will be somewhat specific to each practicum situation, it is generally expected that the student will:

- a. Learn how to integrate educational theory and practice into the design and delivery of course material
- b. Learn how to develop effective teaching material (e.g., course outline, lecture slides, etc.) for use in an undergraduate course
- c. Learn how to utilize a variety of teaching techniques to create a supportive and stimulating learning environment
- d. Learn how to manage a classroom, including how to lead a discussion, how to handle questions and answers, how to obtain feedback from students, etc.

2. Teaching Practicum Students: The Selection Process

To be eligible, students must first successfully complete PSYC 6104 (Seminar in University Teaching), the Preparing to Teach Certificate, or the Certificate in University Teaching. The number of students who participate in the program will be determined annually based on student interest and faculty-mentor availability. Applicants for the course will be expected to contact their preferred teaching-mentor to request his/her participation. Normally, applicants must choose someone other than their research supervisor (to provide as much breadth of experience as possible).

Students may apply to participate in this program during any term in which a faculty-mentor agrees to participate. Application for the program must be made well in advance of the term in which students expect to co-teach. Normally, this would be by May 31st for the fall semester, September 30th for the Winter semester. This advanced application is required to provide ample opportunity for the student to participate in *course planning*. Exceptions can be made with permission of the Teaching-Mentor.

Once a teaching-mentor has been found, applicants must complete a Teaching Practicum Learning Contract with the teaching-mentor. This Learning Contract will

provide details about the course in which the student will be mentored as a co-teacher, as well as the details about the expectations for the nature of class contact hours, the nature of the instruction that the student will prepare, frequency of meetings with the teaching-mentor, expectations of the learning journal required, etc.

It is important to note that the intellectual copyright, including the rights for future use, of any materials developed for the course by the student will be the property of the student *and* the teaching mentor who is the instructor of record for the course. Every Learning Contract must include the copyright statement provided as part of the agreement. Once the applicant and teaching mentor have signed off on this contract, the applicant will submit this to the Graduate Supervisor who will review the contract for possible revision and approval.

3. Teaching mentors: The Selection Process

Any full-time faculty member or instructor in the department of psychology is eligible to participate as a teaching mentor. Normally, contract instructors are not permitted to act in the role of teaching mentor. Participating teaching mentors are required to follow the structure of the Mentored Teaching Practicum in terms of the Learning Contract and the principles of mentored-practice (e.g., thoughtful scaffolding of the student's responsibilities throughout the term, timely and frequent feedback, etc.). A short description of the typical expectations of teaching mentors is provided in this document. Considered most generally, teaching mentors need to be prepared to make time for regular meetings with the student co-teacher, involve the student co-teacher in the design of the course and preparation of relevant materials, support the co-teacher in the development of materials (as required), provide class time weekly during which the student will lead instructional activities (e.g., lecture, lead a discussion, present a summary of key ideas), as well as make the time required to prepare letters of reference as requested for employment applications.

4. The Learning Contract: Expectations

As with all graduate-level education, the Learning Contract is meant to be flexible to be able to accommodate the students' current abilities and the desired outcome of the experience. There are, however, specific required elements for the learning contract. These required components are not meant to constrain the student or the teaching mentor, but are meant to ensure that the experience is one of mentored practice, not simply a "chance to teach."

5. Announcement for students in the undergraduate class in which the Doctoral-Student Co-teacher will participate

It is important that the undergraduate students, who are enrolled in the course in which the student will serve as a co-teacher, understand the nature of our doctoral students' participation. The Teaching Practicum students are **not** teaching assistants, and they should not be expected to serve in this function. For example, they should not be responsible for grading except in as much as they may wish to grade some course work for review, discussion, and approval by the teaching mentor (i.e., the instructor of the course). These aspects of the practicum-student's participation must be clearly explained in the Teaching Practicum Learning Contract.

Given that this is a novel program on campus, and undergraduate students might easily confuse the practicum students' role with that of a teaching assistant, PEER support mentor, or as a contract instructor, it is important that the teaching mentor introduce the practicum co-teacher clearly. Below, is a short paragraph that should be read to the students in class early in the term and included on the course website/syllabus, so that students understand what to expect and why.

*I want to introduce you to **Mr./Ms NAME**. **She/he** is joining me in **COURSE NAME** this term as a mentored co-teacher. **Mr./Ms NAME** is a doctoral student in our department who is preparing for an academic career. As part of **her/his** preparation, our department provides a program for mentored-practice. **Mr./Ms NAME** will be teaching throughout the term under my supervision to get experience in the classroom.*

*I'm very excited to have **Mr./Ms NAME** join us this term, as I know this experience will benefit your learning as much as **her/his** own. **Mr./Ms NAME** is well prepared to join me in this teaching capacity as **she/he** has already completed the doctoral seminar in University Teaching (or the Preparing to Teach Certificate), and **she/he** has been active as a teaching assistant. For all of us in this course, this is a rare opportunity to benefit from having two voices and potentially different perspectives in the classroom. Both **Mr./Ms. NAME** and I are very much looking forward to this opportunity.*

*I want you to know that **Mr./Ms NAME** will NOT be evaluating you in any way. **Mr./Ms NAME** is **NOT** a teaching assistant, and **she/he** will **not** be involved in the course in this capacity. [Note: If TAs are assigned to the course, you might indicate that here and explain that you will introduce them shortly, or you may have chosen to do this first.]*

***Mr./Ms NAME's** role will change throughout the term. You will see that at the beginning **she/he** will take short parts of a class to give part of a lecture or organize another type of learning activity. As appropriate, later in the term, **Mr./Ms NAME** may take on larger portions of a class or lecture. **Mr./Ms. NAME** will certainly be involved*

*to support your learning as **he or she** gains valuable experience in this practicum placement.*

*At the end of the term, I will ask you to do a formal teacher evaluation **of Mr./Ms NAME** just as you will do for me. This is important for **Mr./Ms NAME** in terms of formative feedback in **her/his** learning and as preparation for employment applications.*

*Again, I want to emphasize how excited I am to have **Mr./Ms NAME** join us this term. I welcome your feedback throughout the term, as does **Mr./Ms NAME**. Please help me welcome **Mr./Ms NAME** to our course (applause).*

***She/he** would now like to say a few words about **her/his** preparation with the completion of the Seminar in University Teaching as well as the plans for **his/her** role this term.*

6. Expectations of teaching mentors

Teaching mentors are expected to extend the kind of supervisory role provided in research to the professional role as teacher. This will take many different forms depending on the nature of the course, the desired experience of the student, the student's past teaching experience and abilities, as well as the teaching-mentor's own comfort level and experience with serving in this capacity.

As mentored-practice is the central part of our role with graduate students in our department, we are all well acquainted with this type of relationship. Successful mentoring requires regular time spent with the student, structured expectations about roles and responsibilities, expectations that facilitate the student's growth while not undermining her or his self-efficacy beliefs, and the appropriate use of timely and frequent feedback.

Each September, a previous teaching mentor will offer an orientation session for doctoral students and full-time faculty members or instructors who are interested in participating in this Teaching Practicum. The orientation session will be an opportunity for both students and faculty to ask questions about the program and their involvement in it.

As this is a new initiative in the department, we expect that we will all learn how best to structure this opportunity for our students in the first few years. Your feedback is important, as is your patience as we learn how best to do this.