

Guidelines for Certificate in College/University Teaching Practicum

Rationale

The graduate Certificate in College/University Teaching requires completion of a teaching practicum as part of the program's 12-hour degree requirements. Effective teaching, like any other skill, requires practice and the guidance of skilled faculty members. The teaching practicum provides inexperienced as well as experienced teachers the benefit of instructional expertise and mentoring of faculty within his/her own discipline. The practicum also gives future faculty the opportunity to experiment with new teaching techniques or program ideas in an environment where they can consult with others.

The teaching practicum is not an independent teaching experience. Rather it is one that provides feedback and supervision by a faculty member who oversees a "guided teaching/learning" experience. The practicum can be completed in a faculty member's course where the faculty member remains the primary instructor for the course and the graduate student assists, or in a course for which the graduate student is the primary instructor. In each case, evidence must be provided that documents in-class instruction and a range of supervisory and reflective experiences. While flexibility is allowed in meeting this requirement, it must be demonstrated that the practicum experience meets AU's academic standards for the graduate credits provided.

The teaching practicum should be designed to give the student actual teaching experience and developmental feedback. Practicum students should be involved in course planning and implementation as well as assessment of students and of the course throughout the semester. They should perform a variety of instructional roles, including at a minimum, the independent teaching of a subject unit in the course and regular classroom attendance for a semester. The supervising instructor should approve all assessment instruments developed by the practicum student.

Suggested Specific Requirements:

Minimum Class Size:

The course being taught by the teaching practicum student must include at least five students. With fewer it becomes more of a tutoring experience, which is quite different from the kind of teaching done in most US colleges and universities.

Face-to Face Instruction:

The teaching practicum should include a minimum of fifteen (15) hours of face-to-face instruction. These teaching hours can be divided in many different ways from one hour/week over the course of a semester to several intense weekend workshops. While shorter teaching experiences can be useful, this minimum requirement insures that our students will be in a teaching setting long enough to have a variety of experiences and, therefore, be required to deal with a range of challenges during their practicum. The fifteen hours of instruction time does not include preparation hours.

Supervision and Observation:

Unless an exception is approved in advance by the certificate coordinator, the teaching practicum must be done under the supervision of a faculty member at AU and an AU faculty member must be the instructor of record in the practicum course in which the practicum student is enrolled. However, an instructor at another institution of higher education can provide additional classroom observation and supervision. Students work with their supervisor to design the practicum and receive feedback on all aspects of course design, delivery and assessment.

The practicum student must be observed teaching at least three class sessions. The faculty supervisor can conduct these observations or if unable to be present at all three, arrange for the Biggio Center or another faculty member to conduct some number of the observations. The Biggio Center, or another individual can also videotape class instruction for review and feedback by the faculty supervisor at a later date.

The practicum student should complete some form of self and course appraisal before the class observation visit. This should be the basis for a conference discussion between the student and the supervisor/observer before the class observation. This appraisal should include:

- a. An overview of the class-to-date,
- b. The practicum student's overall course objectives and teaching philosophy,
- c. How well the students in class are prepared and motivated,
- d. The physical or environmental factors that may be influencing the class,
- e. The teaching approaches being used and reasons for using them,
- f. The direct purpose of the observation and particular needs or things to look for,
- g. The practicum student's goals for the class being observed,
- h. Class assignments/activities and those that preceded the class.

The supervisor/observer should review the course syllabus carefully before visiting the class.

The practicum student should inform his/her class prior to class visit explaining the purpose and value of the observation and encourage students to act as natural as possible.

The class observation should last the entire class or at least 50 minutes for multi-hour class.

The supervisor/observer should use the same procedures and observation checklist for each observation (sample observation check-lists are available at the Biggio Center).

The supervisor/observer should comment on student behavior as well as practicum student behavior.

Written and Verbal Feedback:

Based on the observation and pre-observation consultation, and examination of course materials, the supervisor/observer should provide written and verbal feedback to the practicum student on (as appropriate):

- a. Mastery of course content

- b. Communication skills
- c. Enthusiasm
- d. Clarity of instruction
- e. Organization
- f. Selection of course and lesson content
- g. Appropriateness of course objectives
- h. Appropriateness of instructional materials (e.g., readings, use of media)
- i. Application of most appropriate methodology for teaching specific content areas
- j. Commitment to teaching and concern for student learning
- k. Student achievement based on performance on exams and projects

The supervisor/observer should prepare a detailed follow-up report and meet with the practicum student to discuss results of the observation within one week of the classroom visit.

It is recommended that the supervisor/observer provide feedback following this format:

- a. Ask the practicum student to share his/her reactions and thoughts of the class.
- b. Review written comments made during and after the observation
- c. Start feedback with positive (strengths) and then alternate strengths and suggestions for improvement.
- d. Avoid judgmental statements.
- e. Discuss follow-up improvement activities.
- f. Schedule additional observations as needed.

Reflective Analysis:

The practicum student should write a reflective analysis of the observation and consultation and include it in the Practicum Portfolio.

Capstone Practicum Portfolio:

A Practicum Portfolio approved by the practicum student's supervisor should be used to document successful completion of a teaching practicum. The portfolio should contain:

- a. An overall description of the teaching practicum
- b. A philosophy of teaching statement
- c. A copy of the syllabus
- d. A sample lesson plan
- e. Examples of student work
- f. Evaluations by students of the practicum student's teaching
- g. Pre-observation appraisal reports
- h. Supervisor/observer's classroom observation reports
- i. Practicum student's reflective journal

Revised Draft 11/13/09 JEG