

Practicums in the MSN Program

MSN Clinical Practicum Basics

Practicum courses have specific requirements for learning activities, site affiliations, and practicum preceptor/community mentor qualifications. The number of required practicum hours are three (3) “clock hours” for each academic unit/credit of practicum or lab. Some examples follow:

- NURS 6000 and NURS 6100 = 90 practicum hours in each course
- NURS 6585 = 45 hours practicum hours
- NURS 6752 = 90 hours practicum hours
- NURS 6880 = 90 hours practicum hours

Preceptors are assigned to assist and supervise graduate nursing student during practicum experiences; the practicum experiences are designed and directed by a CSUSB graduate faculty member.

Clinical practicums in the MSN program are planned according to American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) guidelines for master’s-level practicums. Details of the student’s practicum experience are guided by the course learning outcomes and practicum assignment descriptions in the syllabus. Preceptors assist/supervise students voluntarily; they are not paid by the University.

1. Departmental Compliance Requirements—All MSN students must meet departmental compliance requirements by published due dates prior to attending practicum activities. This includes possession of a current unrestricted RN license. *Be aware that compliance requirements are subject to change.*
2. Clinical Site Affiliation Contracts - The MSN Program Coordinator must verify there is a current clinical site Affiliation Contract before a student may begin clinical practicum activities.
3. Preceptors or Community Mentors/Faculty Preceptors -
 - a. Each student must have an advanced-level clinical preceptor/mentor.
 - b. The preceptor must hold a current unrestricted RN license and be prepared at the graduate level with a Master’s degree in nursing (MSN or MN).
 - c. On occasion, a clinical agency will have on staff an RN who does not hold a graduate degree in nursing, rather holding a graduate degree in a non-nursing field, but who has the experience and knowledge in the selected clinical area to contribute to the student’s learning. In these cases the above-mentioned RN could be permitted to serve as a Community Mentor with approval by the supervising course instructor and the MSN Program Coordinator(s). A Community Mentor will be paired with a doctorally-prepared Faculty Preceptor (Community Mentor/Faculty Preceptor dyad) who will together mentor the student in the advanced nursing perspectives required for advanced nursing practice.
 - d. The Preceptor/Community Mentor shall have worked at least one (1) year in their role/specialty.
4. Planning of Practicum Learning Activities -
 - a. Each student must discuss and finalize plans with the MSN Coordinator, in discussion as needed with the course instructor, for appropriate practicum placement related to advanced practice in the community.
 - b. The practicum placement must be a new and separate learning experience

- outside of the student's employment role.
- c. Appropriate practicum activities will be determined based on the course description and course learning outcomes.
 - d. Appropriate practicum activities may depend on the concentration selected by the student (e.g., NURS 6880 Advanced Role Practicum).
 - e. Students are expected to write specific learning goals and objectives relevant and specific to their practicum placement and the practicum objectives for the term. These individual goals and objectives will be part of the student's practicum log/ reflection journal and may be discussed during seminar meetings and individually with the course instructor.
 - f. The MSN Coordinator and supervising course faculty must approve the selection of the preceptor or community mentor before practicum activities begin.
 - g. All documentation required by the practicum agency/organization must be submitted before practicum activities may begin.
5. Conduct of Practicum Activities -
- a. The student must plan to spend at least half of the required practicum hours on-site with the designated preceptor or with other pertinent agency personnel as arranged by the preceptor.
 - b. On-site activities with preceptors typically include but are not limited to: observing direct patient contact if the preceptor delivers direct patient care, attending meetings with preceptors and other appropriate resource persons within the agency/ organization, reviewing internal sources of information about services provided by the agency/organization, planning the details of a program/project, carrying out activities to implement a program/project, and evaluating the outcomes of a program/project.
 - c. The student must meet/communicate weekly with the practicum preceptor or community mentor/faculty preceptor.
 - d. Students are expected to incorporate theoretical concepts from class into practicum learning experiences. Making the link between the course theoretical concepts and practicum experiences should be evident in the practicum journal.
 - e. Students are expected to demonstrate professional behaviors and appropriate skills in initiating and completing all practicum activities and demonstrating MSN competencies.
 - f. Students are expected to keep a practicum log/ reflection journal; a template will be provided. The log/journal should include:
 - Documentation of practicum hours and activities for each week.
 - Documentation of activities as they relate to the five advanced nursing roles (educator, consultant, research, advanced clinical practice, leadership)
 - Documentation of course or specialty competencies and objectives met.
 - Reflection/comments on practicum experiences.
6. Students' Practicum Activities Are Uncompensated -
- a. Graduate students will receive no compensation from the clinical facility where the student completes course-related practicum activities.

Establishment of Practicum Sites (Affiliation Contracts)

Graduate students' practicums take place in faculty-approved settings that are selected based on the students' concentration, population, and the learning outcomes of the practicum.

Supervising course faculty may suggest new possible affiliating agencies/organizations and can work with the MSN Program Coordinator to establish formal Affiliation Contracts between CSUSB and the clinical agency.

A graduate student may not begin practicum activities at a selected clinical site unless and until an approved Affiliation Contract is in place.

Graduate Students: Practicum Guidelines & Responsibilities

The graduate student will:

1. Be current in all MSN student Compliance requirements, as evidenced by submission of required documents in the online compliance management system (e.g., CastleBranch®).
2. Draft a Student Clinical Practicum Contract (Appendix I), based on the learning outcomes of the practicum course, and discuss it with the supervising faculty member for approval prior to the first day of the practicum.
3. Provide the preceptor or community mentor with a copy of the MSN Clinical Handbook with Appendices and a copy of the course syllabus including objectives.
4. Provide the preceptor or community mentor with an instructor-approved Student Clinical Practicum Contract (Appendix I) to sign on the first practicum day.
 - a. Collect the signed Contract form, leave a copy with the preceptor/mentor, and submit the signed Contract original to the faculty member, keeping a copy for yourself.
5. Complete the Clinical Agency Information Form (Appendix IV) with the assistance of the preceptor/community mentor.
6. Establish with the practicum preceptor or community mentor/faculty preceptor a mutually agreeable schedule for on-site practicum time and communicate the schedule to faculty.
7. Establish with the supervising faculty member a mutually agreeable schedule for regular weekly faculty-student conferences. The supervising faculty member may establish specific blocks of time during which he/she is available to meet with graduate students.
8. Prepare for and participate in the practicum experience to perform in accordance with the assigned learning activities consistent with the course description and learning outcomes.
9. Devote the required time (i.e., practicum hours), stipulated in the practicum course syllabus, to the required activities of the practicum.
10. Uphold professional standards of clinical practice; a student who demonstrates unprofessional or unsafe behavior will fail the practicum.
 - a. Wear the professional attire approved by the clinical agency.
 - b. Wear a CSUSB student badge at all times while in the clinical setting.
 - c. Adhere to the agreed-upon schedule for the practicum experience.
 - d. Function within the scope of practice of the Registered Nurse under the California Nurse Practice Act.
 - e. Adhere to policies and procedures established in the clinical agency/site, including health, safety, and privacy (HIPAA) standards.
 - f. Communicate professionally with the preceptor/community mentor, faculty, patients, and clinical facility staff.
 - g. Communicate important patient problems identified during the practicum experience to the appropriate persons accurately and without delay.

- h. Be accountable for own actions.
 - i. Demonstrate organizational skills and priority-setting appropriate to the clinical setting.
 - j. Exhibit clinical reasoning and clinical judgment skills appropriate for a nurse in advanced nursing practice.
 - k. Safely perform any direct patient care activities that are part of the learning experience.
 - l. Adhere to ethical standards of the nursing profession including honesty, respect for human dignity, and advocacy.
11. Keep the preceptor/community mentor informed about the learning activities.
 12. Take the initiative in seeking faculty consultation outside of regularly scheduled meeting times if you deem it necessary.
 13. Notify the preceptor or community mentor/faculty preceptor and the supervising faculty member immediately if an error occurs or safety has been compromised.
 14. Schedule weekly conferences (virtual, phone, and/or face-to-face sessions) at mutually agreed upon times with the preceptor/community mentor, to discuss clinical experiences and progress toward learning outcomes. Should the preceptor/community mentor be unavailable to conference at any point, arrange to exchange “check-in” email messages until the preceptor/community mentor is again available to conference.
 15. Turn in completed practicum log/reflection journal, Record of Student Collaboration with Preceptor/Mentor (Appendix V), and Graduate Student Evaluation of Preceptor/Mentor form (Appendix VII) by posted due dates. Failure to turn in all required documentation will result in an incomplete grade.

Supervising Course Faculty: Guidelines & Responsibilities

The supervising course faculty member will:

1. In collaboration with the MSN Program Coordinator, consult with each student regarding possible clinical site and preceptor/mentor placements based upon the student’s concentration and population of interest.
2. Approve the finalized Student Clinical Practicum Contract (Appendix I) prior to commencement of the student’s practicum activities.
3. Ensure the preceptor/mentor has received and understands the MSN Clinical Handbook, course syllabus, Preceptor/Mentor Information Form (Appendix II), and Preceptor/Mentor Evaluation of Student form (Appendix VI).
4. Collect the Clinical Agency Information form (Appendix IV) from the student.
5. Establish with the student a mutually agreeable schedule for regular weekly faculty-student conferences.
6. Arrange regular meetings with preceptor/mentor during the term, at least mid-way and at the conclusion, for evaluation purposes. Whenever possible, arrange to meet the preceptor/mentor in person, preferably at the clinical site, at least once during the term.
7. Be available by email and/or phone to provide timely consultation and/or support of the preceptor/mentor when needed or when problems are reported.
8. Seek preceptor/mentor input regarding the students’ performance (Appendix VI).
9. Review student’s practicum log/ reflection journal, Record of Student Collaboration with Preceptor/Mentor (Appendix V), and the Preceptor/Mentor Evaluation of Student form (Appendix VI) prior to preparing the student’s final practicum evaluation.
10. Prepare a written practicum evaluation summary, discuss with the student, and place in the student’s file.

11. Collect each student's Graduate Student Evaluation of Preceptor/Mentor form (Appendix VII) at the end of the term. Failure by students to turn in all required documentation will result in an incomplete grade.
12. Collect and forward Graduate Student Evaluation of Preceptor/Mentor forms (Appendix VII) to the MSN Program Coordinator for review by the Graduate Affairs Committee.

Preceptor [Or Community Mentor & Faculty Preceptor]: Guidelines & Responsibilities

The clinical preceptor, or community mentor and faculty preceptor (CM&FP), will:

1. Complete and submit to the supervising faculty member the Preceptor/Mentor Information Form (Appendix II) and the Preceptor/Mentor Agreement (Appendix III).
2. Orient herself/himself to the nature of the MSN practicum as described in the MSN Clinical Handbook, course syllabus, and Student Clinical Practicum Contract.
3. Acknowledge the details of the Student Clinical Practicum Contract (Appendix I) with a signature and return the signed copy of the Contract to the student, who should make a copy for the preceptor/mentor.
4. Assist the student in completing the Clinical Agency Information Form (Appendix IV).
5. Supervise the student as she/he carries out the planned practicum activities in/related to the practicum setting.
 - a. Oversee the student's orientation to the setting.
 - b. Facilitate the student's access to pertinent policies, procedures, and information needed to carry out practicum activities.
 - c. Mentor the student in the advanced nursing practice activities associated with the practicum course (e.g., demonstrate advanced practice activities to the student including but not limited to direct care delivery activities as appropriate, reviewing internal documents to gain familiarity with services offered by the agency/organization, attending meetings of groups of which the preceptor is a member, meeting with and learning from other pertinent stakeholders at the preceptor's recommendation, collecting internal information to assess the health and health-related factors of a population, developing/implementing/evaluating a program/project to improve health outcomes of a population, designing lesson plan, teaching instructional sessions, evaluating learning).
6. Schedule weekly conferences (virtual, phone, and/or face-to-face sessions) at mutually agreed upon times with the preceptor [or community mentor and faculty preceptor], to discuss practicum experiences and progress toward learning outcomes.
7. Attend regular meetings with the supervising faculty member during the term, at least mid-way and at the conclusion, for evaluation purposes.
8. Review the Record of Student Collaboration with Preceptor/Mentor (Appendix V) at the conclusion of the term for accuracy and sign the form.
9. Complete the Preceptor/Mentor Evaluation of Student (Appendix VI) and forward it to the supervising faculty member.

Evaluation of Student Practicum Performance

1. Course learning outcomes and the students' individual learning outcomes are used in evaluating student performance during the practicum.
2. Feedback from the preceptor/mentor, using the Preceptor/Mentor Evaluation of Student form (Appendix VI), will inform the supervising course instructor's evaluation of student performance.

3. A written practicum evaluation summary will be completed by the supervising course faculty using a standard template, discussed with the student, and placed in the student's file.
4. The quality of the student's professional conduct of practicum work will be graded Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit. A practicum grade of Pass or Credit is required to pass the course.