

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Practicum Guidelines

CRM 490

CRML 490



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

Department of Sociology and Criminology

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Introduction

The Criminal Justice Practicum is an applied learning program designed to help students develop a more complete understanding of the criminal justice system through real-world experience. The practicum builds upon and enhances the education students receive in the traditional classroom setting. Criminal justice programs at colleges and universities began regular use of applied learning in the late 1960s. Over the past 30 years, UNCW has placed hundreds of criminal justice students in local, state and federal agencies to augment the learning process. Former students frequently mention the Criminal Justice Practicum as the most important learning experience in their undergraduate education, and an essential first-step in entering the professional work force directly out of college.

The practicum will greatly enhance your personal and professional development. You will gain valuable experience in a criminal justice agency. You will also begin to develop a network of professional relationships. These contacts often lead to future employment, occasionally in the agency where you completed your practicum, or by having your contacts write letters of recommendation or make calls to colleagues in other agencies. But as in most things in life, you only get out what you put in. *Your professional career starts right NOW! Promise yourself to make the most of this opportunity.*

Educational objectives of practicum

- Expand and enrich student understanding of the criminal justice system;
- Supplement classroom learning with active real-life learning;
- Apply social science theories and principles to the real world;
- Develop professional knowledge and skill-sets necessary for future employment;
- Help refine career plans and goals.

Practicums vs. Internships

There tends to be confusion regarding the difference between a **practicum** and an **internship**. Actually, practicums and internships are quite similar. Both are a type of experiential learning where students “learn by doing.” Both practicums and internships require an agreement among the student, the university, and the participating agency; students typically work for an entire semester in an agency for academic credit under the direction of a faculty instructor and an agency supervisor. An additional similarity between practicums and internships is that students are normally expected to complete a semester-long project or write a paper at the conclusion of the experience.

The main difference between practicums and internships is the degree of formal instruction built into the experience. Practicums stay closer to the traditional classroom format. For example, the Criminal Justice Practicum requires weekly classroom meetings to share students’ experiences and to integrate core concepts and theories learned through formal study of the discipline. Practicum students and the faculty instructor work closely together through frequent communication. By way of contrast, internships often entail less formal contact between the student and faculty instructor during the semester and seldom is there a classroom component. Student-*interns* are monitored more by the participating agency than by the university.

Eligibility for Enrollment

An overall GPA of 2.00 (2.3 GPA in the major) and senior standing are the minimum program requirements for enrollment in the criminal justice practicum. This is a “Permission Only” course, meaning that students must receive the formal permission of the instructor before they may enroll in the class. Students must be in good standing with the university and have no major criminal record. **NOTE: MOST AGENCIES REQUIRE A BACKGROUND CHECK OF STUDENTS. A SERIOUS BLEMISH ON YOUR RECORD OR PENDING CHARGE MAY DISQUALIFY YOU FROM THE PRACTICUM.**

Credit Hours

The criminal justice practicum is a 4-hour block. Students must enroll in both CRJM490 Practicum (3 hours) and CRML 490 Practicum Lab (1 hour). The CRM 490 Practicum course requires students to work *a minimum* of 150 hours during the semester in their assigned agency, or roughly 10 to 12 hours per week over a 15 week period. A time sheet is used to record the hours. The CRML 490 Practicum Lab is held once a week. The lab gives students the opportunity to meet with the instructor and other practicum students to discuss various issues related to the course.

Enrollment Procedures

- X Meet with practicum instructor at least ONE FULL semester before you intend to take the course. Your junior year is a good time to start planning for the practicum. You and the instructor will discuss your career plans and to decide what agency would be the best fit for you (see *List of Agencies*, attached).
- X Fill out the *Application Form* (attached) and return to practicum instructor.
- X Meet with your main academic advisor for course scheduling. Try to arrange your classes on a MWF or TR sequence so that you have time available to work in the agency.
- X Have practicum instructor enter “Course Override” into the computer to enable you to register for CRM 490 and CRML 490. This is done at the normal time for registration.
- X Once enrolled in the practicum, make contact with agency supervisor to set up practicum interview (*this needs to be done early but absolutely no later than the last day of classes in the semester prior to the start of your practicum*).
- X Take a copy of your resume to interview. Dress professionally.
- X Keep your practicum instructor up-to-date during this entire process.
- X Be ready to start practicum as soon as the semester begins.

Please understand that the criminal justice practicum requires a SIGNIFICANT amount of time, energy and commitment. It is not an easy course, and it is not for everyone.

List of Agencies

Criminal Justice Practicum

Bladen County Sheriff's Department
Brunswick County Adult Probation & Parole
Coastal Horizon Center (TASC)
CUE -- Center for Missing Persons
Jacksonville Police Department
Juvenile Detention Center
Juvenile Services Division
Kure Beach Police Department
LINC (Leading Into New Communities, Inc.)
New Hanover County District Attorney's Office
New Hanover County Correctional Center
New Hanover County Sheriff's Department
North Carolina Adult Probation & Parole
Pender County Correctional Facility
Pender County Sheriffs Department
Public Defender's Office (New Hanover County)
UNCW Campus Police
U.S. Probation
Wilmington Police Department
Wrightsville Beach Police Department

Please see agency websites if you are interested in interning with any of the following:

Naval Criminal Investigative Services:

<http://www.ncis.navy.mil/careers/interns/pages/default.aspx>

North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation:

<http://www.ncdoj.gov/About-DOJ/Employment/Summer-Internships/Internships-with-the-SBI.aspx>

To learn more about practicum opportunities in the agencies listed above, contact:

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Application Form

Criminal Justice Practicum

(Please Type or Print Clearly)

Name: _____

Major: _____

Address: _____

Total Hrs Completed: _____

Overall GPA: _____

Major GPA: _____

I.D. Number: _____

Phone: __ (____) _____

UNCW E-Mail: _____

Exp. Graduation: _____

I request permission to enroll in the criminal justice practicum (CRM 490) and the practicum lab (CRML 490) for the _____ (fall/spring) semester of _____ (year).

Have you met and discussed your desire to enroll in the practicum with your CRM advisor?

Yes _____ No _____

Advisor's Name: _____

Please list your top three placement choices (refer to [List of Agencies](#)):

1st _____

2nd _____

3rd _____

Have you met and discussed placement choices with practicum instructor? Yes ___ No ___

Special reason(s) why you desire a certain placement:

What are your career plans?

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Return to:

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