

TOURISM AND EVENTS  
MANAGEMENT  
PRACTICUM MANUAL

**Fieldwork Coordinator**

**Tina Jones**

*Email: [tjonesq@gmu.edu](mailto:tjonesq@gmu.edu)*

*Phone: 703 993 2062*



School of Sport, Recreation,  
and Tourism Management

# TEM Practicum Manual

This manual is designed to provide an overview of the practicum experience in the Tourism and Events Management (TEM) program. The following sections outline the purpose, requirements and responsibilities of all parties involved with the practicum experience.

## 1. Purpose, Objectives and Definitions

The Tourism and Events Management practicum provides practical experience in an approved, student-selected voluntary or paid employment setting. This 3-credit course includes 120 hours of supervised practical experience in an approved tourism, hospitality, or events management setting. This course should be taken early in the academic program.

The practicum is a structured and supervised, work experience that may be paid or voluntary, and takes place at a variety of public, private, semi-private or commercial agencies. It involves a three-way partnership agreement between Mason, an approved site, and the student.

During the practicum, the student receives professional preparation coordinated by a faculty supervisor in addition to direction from a qualified site supervisor. The practicum provides industry specific opportunities for student participation, organization, and administration.

By the end of the practicum students should be able to:

1. Describe and analyze the managerial and operational structure of their practicum site;
2. Demonstrate skills and competencies in routine business administration (e.g. accounting and record keeping, planning, public relations, assessments, staff relations);
3. Evaluate the personal strengths and weaknesses in light of demands and expectations of employment in the various positions in the field; and
4. Set career objectives in the tourism, events, and hospitality management industry.

## 2. Benefits

**Students** benefit from the practicum experience by having the opportunity to apply their classroom knowledge to real world settings. This experiential learning allows students to be better prepared and more marketable for the current job market demands. They have support from their internship coordinator, faculty and site supervisors to learn how to negotiate the challenges faced by young professionals. This experience affords students the opportunity to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and assess their future employment aspirations.

The TEM program recognizes the benefits of an academically sound practicum program, which includes the provision and utilization of feedback from the site supervisor and the student in the continuing evaluation of the TEM curriculum. The program aims to produce well-prepared students by integrating the theoretical and practical experiences of their given industry of choice.

**Sites** that provide practicum opportunities benefit from the partnership with Mason to develop our future professionals. These students can integrate with professional staff to promote the overall learning experience as students bring a different set of skills, knowledge base, and perspective to the job. It also provides site personnel the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of their in-house training programs or other services based on feedback from students. Students become familiar with an organization's culture and work, and establish close working relationships with current employees. This makes them ideal candidates for any future job vacancies.

### 3. Expectations of Practicum Experience

Students are required to complete 120 hours of professional practice over a period of 10 to 14 weeks in a given semester. Due to the shortened length of the summer semester, summer practicums will be completed within a 10 week time period. By the end of their practicum experience students should have a better understanding and appreciation of the role, duties, and responsibilities of a professional in their chosen field.

The student is expected to assume a wide range of responsibilities:

- **Participation** – A student should be given the opportunity to observe the intricacies of the internal and external working relationships of the site. In addition, student should be allowed to participate in site committee meetings, conferences, and workshops to gain a better understanding of their chosen concentration.
- **Organization** – The student should participate in any appropriate experiences relevant to the site; such as organizing events, evaluation of programs, and analysis of data.
- **Administration** – The site should provide the student with practical experience employing routine administrative skills, techniques and practices. The student should gain experience in a variety of site operations (e.g., accounting and record-keeping, event management, facility operation, maintenance procedures, planning, program development, public relations, research, marketing, risk management, and human resources) as appropriate.

### 4. Student Eligibility

Students who plan to register for this course must:

- Have passed TOUR 200, TOUR 220, and TOUR 230;
- Have at least Sophomore status
- Be declared TEM majors.

In addition, students must successfully complete a mandatory Online Orientation, after which they will be granted an override to register for the course.

#### Start and End Dates

The practicum begins on the first day of classes of each semester and **must be completed** by the End Date (the last possible date to complete the practicum) provided by the faculty supervisor. Complete descriptions of all relevant dates are available in [FAQ 7](#).

- Note: The *Experiential Learning Agreement* must be signed by the Dean's Office **before** the practicum can begin – the faculty supervisor will notify students once agreements have been signed.
- Requests for earlier start dates must be made to and approved by the faculty supervisor.

Students will be notified of the **deadline for paperwork submission** by their Faculty Supervisor.

- Students who do not submit their initial paperwork (job description, Appendices 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) by the deadline for paperwork submission will not be able to complete their practicum in the applicable semester.

All summer practicums should start on the first day of classes for Session A and must be completed within 10 weeks or as determined by your Faculty Supervisor.

\*\*\*Students must complete all 120 hours during the semester in which they register for the course.

### **Mandatory Pre-Experience Online Orientation Session**

- Complete the online mandatory pre-experience online orientation session by the deadline below. Save your notice of completion.
  - The mandatory pre-experience orientation session is provided through the Tourism and Events Management Blackboard Organization. Please note that this requirement is different from (and in addition to) the requirement to attend any pre-experience informational meeting(s) that may be required by the Faculty Supervisor (the instructor-of-record for the section).

Note: The sessions are announced through the TEM listserv. Any student who does not receive the listserv emails must contact us at ewhisna@gmu.edu.

### **Deadlines:**

- Spring Practicum: You must attend the online orientation session in the preceding Fall semester.
- Summer Practicum: You must attend the online orientation session in the preceding Spring semester.
- Fall Practicum: You must attend the online orientation session in the preceding Spring semester.

## **5. Site Selection**

Although the faculty supervisor and/or internship coordinator may offer advice, guidance or placement suggestions, students are responsible for seeking out their own practicum positions. Students should begin searching for possible practicum sites several months prior to their chosen practicum semester. This allows ample time for the application/interview process and a thoughtful selection.

The site selection process typically entails:

- Searching for prospective sites using all available resources (e.g.: fieldwork coordinator, faculty mentors, Handshake, TEM News Listserv).
- Following the application and interview processes specified by individual sites. It is typical for a student to apply to 3-6 different sites.
- Obtaining the faculty supervisor's approval to apply if student previously worked at the site. The student must justify in writing how this site can provide further learning opportunities beyond what has already been experienced.
- Submitting official job description from prospective site for approval by the faculty supervisor, before any offer is accepted by student.

### **Official Job Description**

An official job description needs to be submitted to the faculty supervisor for approval **before** any practicum offer is accepted, AND **before** any paperwork will be accepted by the faculty supervisor. Information on what **must be** included in the official job description can be found at [FAQ 6](#).

### **\*Note on Repeat Sites**

If students desire to complete their practicums at sites where they have previously worked, or are currently working, they must complete the practicum in a different department from the one(s) in which they have previously worked (or are currently working); preferably with a different site supervisor. Students must also submit the official job description(s) for the previous (and/or current) position(s), AS WELL AS the official job description for the prospective position, to their faculty supervisors for review.

- **Please note that in order for a repeat site to be approved for TOUR 241, there must be significant and substantive differences between the responsibilities, tasks, activities, and experiences outlined in the prospective positions, compared to those of the previous position(s).**
  - If the repeat site is approved, students will be required to write down, in their own words, how this new position, at the same site, will be beneficial to their skills enhancement, knowledge acquisition, career development, and overall experience.

## **6. Requirements and Grading**

The faculty supervisor assigns the Satisfactory (Pass)/No Credit (Fail) grade based on the student meeting the following requirements:

1. Completing the **mandatory** pre-experience online orientation.
2. Attending any required pre-experience informational session, provided by their faculty supervisor;
3. Submitting **all** properly filled out and signed paperwork to him/her, **including the Experiential Learning Agreement** (the Agreement must be signed by the Dean's Office **before the practicum can begin**), in a timely fashion, and by the paperwork submission deadline;
4. Working at an **approved** practicum site for a minimum of 120 hours of professional practice - for between 10 hours/week and 20 hours/week, depending on when the practicum begins. \*Students may not work more than 40 hours/week without prior approval by the faculty supervisor;
5. Completing and submitting the **Practicum Weekly Reports** each Monday for the week prior;
6. Completing and submitting the **Practicum Midpoint Report** after completion of 60 hours;
7. Completing and submitting the **Practicum Portfolio**;
8. Attending the mandatory **Final Round-table Discussion** on the date determined by the faculty supervisor;
9. Submitting the **Final Practicum Performance Assessment Form** completed by site supervisors;
10. Meeting all other requirements outlined in the Syllabus, Practicum Manual (plus Appendices), and all communication from faculty supervisors and the fieldwork coordinator.

## **7. Academic Policies on Registration and Withdrawing**

Students must comply with University *Academic Policies* for registering, attending, dropping or withdrawing from a course as outlined in the University Catalog.

## **8. Student Responsibilities during the practicum**

During the practicum, which involves a minimum of 120 hours, the student must meet certain responsibilities and obligations to the site and/or site supervisor, as well as to the university to fulfill their requirements. These include:

1. Reporting directly to the site supervisor for instructions. The student is responsible for fulfilling their duties as stipulated by their supervisor, and for meeting their scheduled training commitments and arrangements;
2. Participating in orientation sessions with their site supervisor;
3. Learning and abiding by all the rules, regulations, policies and procedures of the site applicable to their conduct while in the site's employment;
4. Becoming an integral and participating member of the site's staff;
5. Acting in a professional manner both as a site staff member and when dealing with the site's clientele. The student is a representative of GMU and an ambassador for the TEM program. A positive work experience effectively 'paves the way' for the future placement of other interns. It is therefore imperative that a cooperative attitude and good work record and habits be maintained for good rapport between the student, university supervisor and the site;
6. Visiting, observing, and participating in, as appropriate, various levels of the site's operations, including meeting, programs, projects and training sessions. This enables the student to strive toward higher levels of personal and professional growth and fulfillment;
7. Meeting with the site supervisor and the faculty supervisor during an on-site visit, ***if such a meeting is deemed necessary***; otherwise, the faculty supervisor will contact the site supervisor by phone or e-mail for feedback regarding the student's performance if needed;
8. Notify the site supervisor in advance when it is necessary to be absent from work;
9. Participating in post-activity discussion with their site supervisor, and
10. Sharing the following site supervisor responsibilities with their supervisor.

#### **Site Supervisor responsibilities during the practicum**

The site supervisor plays a pivotal role in the lives of students at the personal and professional career level by offering advice, instruction and supervision that furthers a student's professional competence. By providing a challenging and stimulating work experience, students are allowed to discover their own strengths and weaknesses in their chosen professional career. Thus, the site supervisor is expected to assume responsibilities and obligations to the student and the faculty supervisor that foster learning and are in line with the Tourism and Event Management's practicum course. These are summarized below:

1. Providing the student with a structured and supervised on-site learning experience;
2. Preparing the site or institution staff for the arrival of the student, and orienting the student to the site's history (including organizational chart), philosophy, policies regulations, administration, programs and facilities in order to allow the student to function effectively in the practicum setting;
3. Providing timely and fair evaluative summaries of the student's work, including filling in a written *Final Practicum Performance Assessment Form*, which is sent to and discussed with the student;
4. Immediately notifying the practicum faculty supervisor of any emerging condition that significantly affects the student's ability to succeed or complete the agreed upon practicum tasks;
5. Directly reimbursing the student for any costs they are authorized to incur on behalf of the site, or for reimbursable expenses identified in advance by the site;
6. Accepting the student as a volunteer or paid member of staff (as applicable) and afford them all the rights and protections pertaining to that status.

### **Faculty Supervisor responsibilities during the practicum**

1. Assisting the student to develop or acquire resources or skills necessary for the successful completion of assigned tasks;
2. Facilitating resolution of problems that may occur during the practicum between the student and the site;
3. Soliciting evaluative commentary and reports from the student and the site supervisor;
4. Receiving, reviewing and evaluating required submissions from the student and site supervisor;
5. Advising and assisting the site on matters pertaining to enrichment of the educational experience in the practicum.

## **9. Removal or Dismissal of Student**

Every effort should be made by the faculty supervisor and the site supervisor to support the practicum learning process, but on occasion, it may be necessary to either a) remove a student from one site for reassignment to another site, or 2) dismiss a student from his/her practicum. Because of differing site guidelines and stipulations within the university, each student case must be considered separately. However, the following paragraphs discuss general guidelines for removal or dismissal.

### **Removal of a Student by Faculty Supervisor from a Site**

Circumstances may arise where it is necessary for the faculty supervisor to remove a student from a particular site, and relocate him/her to another site without academic penalty. These circumstances can include significant violations of terms of engagement on the part of the site, intimations or conflicts between site supervisor/personnel and the student intern, sexual or other harassments, unsafe working environment, labor-related disruptions, and site bankruptcy or financial exigency. Any of these circumstances may require immediate intervention and/or removal of the student from the practicum.

If a student is unable to carry out practicum duties due to personal reasons (e.g. medical, emotional), all parties will be notified and any appropriate interventions will be employed. This might necessitate removal of the student from the site placement prior to completion of the 120 hour requirement. The faculty supervisor will convene with the site supervisor to determine a mutually agreed upon course of action that benefits the student's practicum experience while also meeting the site's and university's expectations. These situations are rare and shall be assessed on a case by case basis.

### **Student Request for Removal from a Site**

Circumstances may arise where a student feels compelled to request removal from a site. The student cannot initiate any change in practicum assignment until the following procedure has been followed:

1. The student must provide the faculty supervisor a written statement outlining reason(s) for removal from the site as soon as possible. The student must meet or phone conference with faculty supervisor to discuss and confirm removal reasons.
2. Removal decisions rest with the faculty supervisor and the fieldwork coordinator who should share removal consideration with the site supervisor before making a final decision. If removal is deemed necessary, typically, a two-week resignation notice should be given by the student to the site.
3. Because the practicum is meant to be a long-term experience with one site, the student will restart his/her hours at the new site.

### **Dismissal of student intern by site supervisor**

Termination of a student's practicum by a site supervisor is a serious matter and as such, the university expects the site supervisor to make immediate contact with the faculty supervisor if circumstances arise that could eventually lead to the dismissal of a student. The reasons for the termination should be discussed and understood by the faculty supervisor. Possible grounds for dismissal of a student by a site (and hence termination of the *Experiential Learning Agreement* between the University and site) can include lack of student responsibility, engagement by the student in illegal or unethical conduct, and violation of site's policies.

If possible, every effort should be made to reconcile the issues with the understanding that ultimately the site can make the final decision per the *Experiential Learning Agreement*. The faculty supervisor will discuss the student infraction with the site supervisor and the student separately to determine any possible resolutions. In light of a dismissal decision, the faculty supervisor will determine if the dismissal merits a failing grade.

**\*\*If you have any questions please contact your faculty supervisor immediately\*\***