GER 6496
Advanced Practicum in Gerontology

What constitutes an acceptable project and deliverable for the final grade?

The Advanced Practicum is considered a “capstone” course in which you integrate and put into practice what you have learned in the MSG Program. The advanced practicum must include a formal project. What constitutes a project will vary depending on the student and practicum site. Students enrolled in 6496 are required turn in evidence of their project at the end of the term (usually a paper or other written &/or multimedia work product) to receive a grade.

Some site supervisors have ready-made projects to offer, whereas others may look to the student (and faculty mentor) for guidance and ideas. Most projects provide direct and clear benefit to the organization, while also promoting student learning and integration of knowledge. Here are a few projects that students pursued in past years:

- Student A researched and developed a new exercise intervention for independent living residents in a retirement community. The student worked collaboratively with staff and residents, and the student piloted a version before finalizing it and developing a manual that others could use to offer the intervention in the future.

- Student B was trained as an Ombudsman for residents of long-term care settings. The student accessed various publicly available data sources (e.g., through Medicare) and analyzed these data with respect to the quality of care at facilities not yet served by the host organization. The student created a rubric to target facilities to receive newly trained ombudsmen based on risk indicators for residents (i.e., higher risk facilities were prioritized over lower risk).

- Student C conducted a series of 1:1 interviews and two focus groups with stakeholders of an organization. The focus was on how to expand and enhance services for older adults. The student analyzed the findings and wrote up a series of recommendations that the organization could follow in the future. This project also included some internet and library based research to learn what similar organizations across the US provide to their clients.

- Student D developed a program idea for an organization and wrote a grant application to fund the initial pilot effort. The plan was for a subsequent student or staff member to execute the grant if awarded, as the practicum was only of 4 months duration.

- Student E became an integral part of the intervention team at the social service agency, leading support groups and arranging a series of educational events on different topics.

- Student F evaluated the impact of a service program offered by the agency. The agency collected data, already, and the student was able to organize existing data and add additional variables (e.g., through a client survey and some 1:1 phone interviews) to demonstrate the program’s impact and effectiveness. The student wrote up a detailed report and presented to the organization’s Leadership Team.

- Student G developed a pamphlet and guidebook about a topic of interest to many of the organization’s clients. The student shared the draft materials with a select group of clients, as well as staff and other stakeholders, and made modifications based on this feedback.

Deliverables for the final grade will vary depending on the project and what was produced for the organization. You should discuss what’s expected and acceptable with your site supervisor and faculty mentor (usually Dr. Meuser) when first arranging your placement and as your project progresses.

- The “default” deliverable is a detailed reflection paper (8-12 pages, double spaced) which describes (1) the project in context of the organization and its mission, (2) what you did and a timeline of key tasks, (3) what you achieved with examples or data showing impact, and (4) what you learned and how this effort may inform you as a gerontologist in the future. Students A & E above completed reflection papers.

- Students B, C, D, & F above all wrote reports or created significant written products for their organizations. These students turned in this “work product” (which may include other supporting documents from their efforts) and a shorter cover letter about what they learned and will take with them from the experience.

*Turn in your reflection paper or report/work product (with cover letter) to Dr. Meuser (or other faculty mentor if assigned) via email no later than one week before the graduation date for the current semester.*