

University of Northern Colorado
Division of Special Education
Campus Box 141
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VISUAL IMPAIRMENT SPECIALIST

**Practicum Guidelines
EDSE 644**

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The University of Northern Colorado has provided a foundation of theory and knowledge to prospective teachers of students with visual disabilities through course offerings and field experiences. However, the practicum experience offers a realistic teaching situation and is invaluable in transforming the teacher candidate into a true teacher of students with visual impairment with high-level teaching competencies. The selection of the cooperating teacher and the educational program represented recognizes outstanding qualities and a belief that best practice in education of students with visual disabilities are demonstrated.

The intent of the practicum is to give the graduate student as full and complete a picture as possible of the cooperating teacher's responsibilities on a day-to-day basis. This may include after school activities, meetings, and conferences that are a part of the supervising teacher's professional responsibilities. The learning potential for the practicum student is directly related to the quality of supervision, suggestions, and input of the cooperating teacher. It should be noted that the practicum student's academic requirements have been incorporated into the practicum by UNC faculty and that further assignments such as projects and papers are not to be made by the cooperating teacher unless agreed upon by the university consultant.

During a traditional practicum placement the first one or two weeks the practicum student will be primarily observing students and teachers, reviewing records, determining needs, gaining a feel for the philosophy and objectives of the program, and becoming familiar with the instructional strategies and techniques used. During the next three to five weeks, the practicum student may accept the major responsibility for several students on the cooperating teacher's caseload at the discretion of the cooperating teacher and the university consultant. The practicum student will assume, with supervision, the majority of the cooperating teacher's workload by the end of the nine-week practicum. As the practicum student assumes increasing amounts of responsibility for teaching during the final weeks of the practicum, the cooperating teacher assumes the role of observer and evaluator.

The key to a successful practicum experience is an adequate understanding and fulfillment of the roles and responsibilities of each party involved: the practicum student, the cooperating teacher, and the university consultant. Toward this end we offer these guidelines to each member of the team. These guidelines are meant to be useful to all. We look forward to working with you.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRACTICUM STUDENT

It is recommended that the practicum student:

1. Initiate contact with the cooperating teacher and, when possible, schedule a visit to the practicum site prior to the reporting date.
2. Become familiar with the entire program and support services.
3. Follow established procedures, practices, and requirements of the practicum facility, particularly with regard to work times, inservice experiences, and extracurricular activities. During the practicum, the student teacher is subject to the same work hours as the supervising teacher.
4. Become involved in extra-curricular activities and other relevant functions of the facility.
5. Take responsibility for learning about the background and individual characteristics of each child served by the supervising teacher.
6. Complete all tasks, which are assigned by the supervising teacher and by the university supervisor during the practicum experience.
7. Develop meaningful objectives and maintain written lesson plans for each assigned student.
8. Make arrangements for his or her own transportation to and from the practicum site and within the district.
9. Contact the university consultant in the event that problems arise that cannot be resolved at the practicum site. The first step, however, is to discuss the problems with the supervising teacher.
10. Notify the supervising teacher of absences as soon as possible (more than two absences will need to be made up and may result in an extension of the practicum).
11. Complete a portfolio of the practicum experience that includes all required forms and assignments. This is to include photos of the practicum student teaching and other artifacts as they are appropriate. Specific information about the organization of the portfolio will be given as the practicum begins.
12. Keep a journal of self-reflection describing your daily teaching experiences and e-mail it weekly to the university consultant.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COOPERATING TEACHER

It is recommended that the cooperating teacher:

1. Demonstrate, guide, supervise, and evaluate the school related activities of the practicum student. The practicum experience is the high point of the student's training. The practicum can provide a breadth of realistic experiences simply not available through course work.
2. Provide opportunities for the practicum student to gain information about the needs, goals, and objectives for each child with visual disabilities through discussions, conferences, records, and observations.
3. Familiarize the practicum student to the philosophy, policies and procedures of the school system or agency.
4. Provide opportunities for a variety of related experiences. This may include observations in other classrooms, therapy sessions, meetings, conferences and visits to local community resources.
5. Assist the practicum student in developing realistic and purposeful objectives and educational plans.
6. Arrange activities that provide opportunities for the practicum student to work with parents or other family members.
7. Provide teaching experiences in related areas upon agreement with the university consultant. These may vary depending upon the needs of the teacher candidate.
8. Conduct weekly formal and/or informal observations of the practicum student's activities and meet weekly to give feedback on these observations.
9. Submit evaluation reports to the university coordinator of the practicum student's progress and recommend a final grade.
10. Notify the university consultant of problems that arise, particularly those that require immediate attention. Problems should first be discussed with the practicum student.
11. Require that the practicum student follow university policies regarding absences. (More than two absences must be made up and may result in an extension of practicum.)
12. Be prepared to write a recommendation for the practicum student's placement file, if appropriate.

13. Allow the practicum student to participate in IEP and IFSP meetings.

14. Provide social security number and home address to the university consultant to facilitate payment.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY CONSULTANT

It is recommended that the university consultant:

1. Select a potential practicum site after considering the student's professional and geographic preferences.
2. Initiate appropriate communication with the potential practicum facility prior to the assignment.
3. Send the practicum guidelines and other pertinent information about the practicum student to the cooperating teacher.
4. Initiate reporting procedures to facilitate appropriate reimbursement of the cooperating teacher (this necessitates securing social security number and home address of cooperating teacher).
5. Schedule visits with the cooperating teacher to be distributed throughout the practicum experience (out-of-state placements may prohibit visiting, but other means of conferencing will be employed).
6. Maintain open communication with the cooperating teacher and practicum student and assist in resolving any problems that may occur.
7. Evaluate progress reports and assign final grade with the recommendation of the cooperating teacher.
8. Distribute copies of the final practicum evaluation to the student's departmental file, special education office, and placement office.

SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES

SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES FOR PLACEMENTS IN EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES
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The practicum student should be included in as many varied activities as possible. This may include team meetings, IEP meetings, home visits, working with community agencies, parent conferences, etc.

Week 1 Orientation to Placement

- Interview Cooperating Teacher, complete Cooperating Teacher Interview Form, and insert in portfolio (**Practicum Student**).
- Complete Practicum Site Observation Form and insert in portfolio (**Practicum Student**)
- Informally observe students.
- Provide general assistance to cooperating teacher.

Week 2 Assessment and Instruction

- Complete Caseload Information Form and insert in portfolio (**Practicum Student**)
- Collect information and complete Student Record Form for each student on cooperating teacher's caseload and insert in portfolio (**Practicum Student**)
- Provide 1:1 instruction using cooperating teacher's lesson plan.
- Complete a communications skills assessment with one student.
- Plan and implement an individualized plan for the remainder of the practicum with the student assessed above.
 This plan should include:
 -Goals for the practicum period.
 -Objectives to meet these goals.
 -Activities to be taught that will result in achievement of objectives (including teaching environment(s), specialized materials, equipment)
 -Methods of evaluating progress on the activities (and thus progress towards objectives and goals)
The format for these plans is at the discretion of the cooperating teacher, but should include the above components.

Week 3 Increasing Instructional Responsibility

- Carry out instructional activities as directed by cooperating teacher.
- Observe other programs, support services, etc., participated in by students.
- Assume responsibility for some aspect of daily routine.
- Begin assessment of 1 or 2 other students.
- Collect data on instructional activities.
- Complete 3-week assessment on Practicum Student Evaluation Form (**Cooperating Teacher**).

Week 4 Increasing Instructional Responsibility

- Plan and implement an individualized plan (as in Week 2) for students assessed during week 3 (with cooperating teacher's approval).
- Continue implementation and documentation of previous individual plan.
- Plan individual student lessons with cooperating teacher's assistance.

Week 5-6 Increasing Instructional Responsibility

- Continue implementation and documentation of plans developed above.
- Gradually assume more of cooperating teacher's responsibilities (lesson planning, scheduling, working with other professionals, working with aides, etc.)
- Plan individual student lessons independently for all students.
- Collect data on individual lessons.
- Complete 6-week assessment on Practicum Student Evaluation Form (**Supervising Teacher**).

Week 7-9 Total Responsibility

- Develops schedule and lessons plans for entire week.
- Collect data on individual lessons.
- Continue implementation and documentation of previous individual plans.
- Assume responsibility for the majority of the supervising teacher's duties, with supervision as needed.
- Complete 9-week assessment on Practicum Student Evaluation Form, review with Student Teacher, and return form to UNC (**Cooperating Teacher**).

**FORMS TO BE COMPLETED BY
PRACTICUM STUDENT**

University of Northern Colorado
 School of Special Education
 Visual Impairment Specialist

RECORD OF PRACTICUM HOURS

Maintain this form in your practicum portfolio for review by your university consultant(s).

Name: _____

E-mail Address: _____

(Keep record in terms of clock hours; 60 minutes equals one hour.)

Week of:	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Week's Total (A+B+C)
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	
A = Actual teaching																Total A
B = Observation, routine work, driving, other school activities																Total B
C = Preparation and adaptation of materials																Total C
Grand Total																

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*Maintain this form in your practicum portfolio for review
by your university supervisor.*

PRACTICUM SITE
OBSERVATION FORM

Student's name: _____

Home telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

School/Agency of Placement: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Supervising Teacher's name: _____

Supervising Teacher's E-mail: _____

Type of School/Agency:

Size of School/Agency:

_____ Total number of students/clients enrolled in school/agency

_____ Number of students/clients served by your supervising teacher

_____ Total number of teachers/instructors employed

_____ Number of teachers of students with visual handicaps

_____ Number of orientation & mobility instructors

_____ Number of rehabilitation teachers

_____ Number of occupational therapists

_____ Number of physical therapists

_____ Number of speech/language therapists

Administrative Organization:

School Principal's Name: _____

Responsibilities: _____

Special Education Supervisor's Name: _____

Responsibilities: _____

Related Services Available to Students at the School/Agency (check all that apply):

- School nurse
- School psychologist
- Social worker
- Physical therapist
- Occupational therapist
- Communication Specialist
- Transition Services
- Physician
- Low vision specialist
- Other(s):

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COOPERATING TEACHER
INTERVIEW FORM

Student's name: _____
Home telephone: _____
E-mail: _____
School/Agency of Placement: _____
Address: _____
Telephone: _____
Cooperating Teacher's name & E-mail: _____

Instructions: Sit down with your cooperating teacher and ask the following questions to help familiarize you with your practicum experience.

What formal assessment tools do you use?

What informal assessment do you use? Could you give some examples?

Are there assessment activities that I can do?

Will I have an opportunity to do a functional vision assessment?

How are instructional decisions made?

Who gets placed into regular classrooms and how?

How is time for your instruction allocated?

How are skills to be taught determined?

What instructional approaches are used? How are they established?

What evaluation methods are used to assess skill mastery?

What procedures are used for developing a master schedule?

What type of behavior management procedures do you use? How do you handle discipline problems?

How are special medical needs accommodated?

Is there parent contact? What can I do to become involved with parents?

What is the referral process for students you serve? Who participates? At what point do you become involved in the process?

What are emergency procedures for accidents?

For students with specific medical needs?

For fire?

For inclement weather?

If I am ill and unable to report for practicum, what procedures should I follow?

What in-service and staff meetings should I be prepared to attend? When do they occur?

University of Northern Colorado
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Visual Impairment Specialist

*Maintain this form in your practicum portfolio for review
by your university supervisor(s).*

CASELOAD INFORMATION
FORM

Student's name: _____

Home telephone/ e-mail: _____

School/Agency of Placement: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Cooperating Teacher's name and e-mail: _____

Place a check next to the type of instructional milieu in which you are placed:

_____ Itinerant O&M

_____ Itinerant VH

_____ Rehabilitation agency

_____ Residential school

_____ Resource room

_____ Self-contained class

_____ Other (please describe):

Check the categorical designation(s) of the students with whom you will work:

_____ Blind

_____ Deaf or hearing impaired

_____ Emotional disabilities

_____ Learning disabilities

_____ Legally blind

_____ Low vision

_____ Physical disabilities

_____ Speech/language disabilities

_____ Visually impaired

_____ Other(s) (please specify on next page):

Specify the chronological age range of the students on the caseload:

Youngest: _____ years, to oldest: _____ years.

Check the general academic level(s) of the students on the caseload:

- _____ Infant
- _____ Preschool
- _____ Preprimary
- _____ Primary
- _____ Elementary
- _____ Intermediate
- _____ Junior High School
- _____ High School
- _____ Post Secondary
- _____ Non graded
- _____ Inclusive setting based on function
- _____ Inclusive setting based on chronological age
- _____ Other(s) (please specify):

How many students are currently on the caseload? _____

Has this number been constant or does it fluctuate? _____

How many students are seen each day:

Monday ____ Tuesday ____ Wednesday ____ Thursday ____ Friday ____

Are instructional or transcription aides available to supplement this program? If so, please describe their responsibilities:

I. ORGANIZATION

1. How is the caseload organized for most instructional activities? (provide examples)

2. How do students know what to do?

3. How is physical space used?

4. What instructional materials are available?

II. MANAGEMENT

1. How do students know what the rules are?
2. What motivation/reinforcers are used?
3. What are the consequences for not following rules?

III. TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. What types of strategies does your supervising teacher utilize?
2. How are activities presented?
3. How are activities practiced?
4. How is mastery judged?

Provide an approximate schedule that you will follow. Please indicate arrival and departure times, school names, and telephone numbers. Send a copy of this form to your university consultant.

Name:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

**FORMS TO BE COMPLETED BY THE
COOPERATING TEACHER**

PRACTICUM STUDENT EVALUATION FORM

Student's name: _____
 Home telephone: _____

School/Agency of Placement: _____
 Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Cooperating Teacher's name: _____

Directions: Cooperating teachers are asked to complete this form at the end of Weeks 3, 6, and 9, using the following evaluation code:

- 1 = Proficient
- 2 = Developing
- 3 = Novice
- n/o = no opportunity

An additional column is available if you wish to add comments.

Practicum Student Behavior	Evaluation				Comments
	1	2	3		
A. PROFESSIONALISM: In relation to work responsibilities, student:					
1. Works independently/uses initiative.					
2. Respects confidential materials.					
3. Accepts responsibility for assigned tasks.					
4. Follows instructions.					
5. Recalls emergency procedures and precautions for setting and individual students.					
6. Makes arrangements when absent.					
7. Participate in the activities of professional organizations in the field of visual impairments.					

Practicum Student Behavior	Evaluation				Comments
	1	2	3		

PROFESSIONALISM: In relation to others:					
1. Sticks to time schedule.					
2. Schedules activities that can be completed during allotted time.					
3. Remains calm.					
4. Can find materials when needed.					
5. Preparation is adequate.					
6. Asks for assistance when needed.					
7. Positive with peers and supervisors.					
8. Uses tact.					
9. Treats children with respect.					
10. Establishes favorable rapport with students/clients.					
11. Establishes favorable rapport with professional staff.					

PROFESSIONALISM: In relation to self:					
1. Changes own behavior in response to feedback.					
2. Accepts criticism in a professional manner.					
3. Is self-confident.					
4. Grooms and dresses appropriately.					

B. ASSESSMENT:					
1. Interprets eye reports and other non-vision related diagnostic information.					
2. Uses disability-specific assessment instruments.					
3. Adapts and uses assessment procedures when evaluating individuals with visual impairments.					
4. Maintains disability-related records for individuals with visual impairments.					
5. Gathers background information and family history related to the individual's visual status.					

6. Interprets and uses assessment data for instructional planning with individuals with visual impairments.					
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C. TEACHING METHODS AND MATERIALS					
Preparation for teaching:					
1. Demonstrates knowledge of subject matter.					
2. Demonstrates knowledge of current trends in the field.					
3. Selects appropriate goals and objectives, based on students' needs.					
4. Writes behavioral objectives.					
5. Chooses appropriate tasks.					
6. Selects appropriate materials.					
7. Selects appropriate teaching strategy.					
8. Pre-plans correction procedure.					
9. Develops evaluation and/or data collection system.					
10. Adapts programs for individual child.					
11. Selects and uses technologies to accomplish instructional objectives for individuals with visual impairments.					
Sequences, implements, and evaluates learning objectives based on the expanded core curriculum for individuals with visual impairments.					
Obtains and organizes special materials to implement instructional goals for individuals with visual impairments.					

Teaching:					
1. Uses language appropriate to child's age.					

2. Uses effective cues/prompts.					
3. Uses effective rate of presentation.					
4. Length of session corresponds to child's attention span.					
5. Maintains high rate of pupil success.					
6. Uses effective correction procedures.					
7. Assures students' safety.					
8. Selects appropriate teaching environment(s).					
9. Enhance instruction for individuals with visual impairments through modification of the environment.					
10. Designs multisensory learning environments that encourage active participation by individuals with visual impairments in group and individual					
11. Creates learning environments that encourage self-advocacy and independence for individuals with visual impairments					
12. Teaches individuals with visual impairments to use thinking, problem-solving, and other cognitive strategies.					
13. Prepares adapted or modified materials in braille, accessible print, and other formats					
14. Transcribes, proofreads, and interlines materials in contracted literary and Nemeth braille codes.					
15. Uses braillewriter, slate and stylus, and computer technology to produce braille materials.					

Data:	
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1. Maintains data for students.					
2. Collects data accurately.					
3. Uses data to make decisions.					

D. SUPERVISION OF PARAPROFESSIONALS					
1. Structures the activities of paraprofessionals who work with individuals with visual impairments.					
2. Plans for best use of paraprofessionals.					
3. Supervises the activities of paraprofessionals who work with students with VI					
4. Gives paraprofessionals feedback on performance.					

E. INTERDISCIPLINARY INTERACTIONS					
1. Is current on therapy or related services programs for individual children.					
2. Carries out generalization from therapies or related services.					
3. Requests input from appropriate related services providers.					
4. Understands rationale for recommendations from therapies.					

F. COLLABORATION					
1. Helps families and other team members understand the impact of a visual impairment on learning and experience.					
2. Participates in IEP or IFSP meetings.					
3. Respects family values.					
4. Seeks family input.					
5. Maintains confidentiality of family interactions.					

Cooperating Teacher

Date

Practicum Student

Date

*Please complete
And return to:*

**Dr. Paula Conroy
SPECIAL EDUCATION PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO
Campus Box 141
GREELEY, COLORADO 80639**

Special Education Major area _____

Accepted Assignment in _____ Public Schools

(Student's Name)

(Student Number)

(Semester Hours)

(Semester)

(Year)

Request for placement of _____ With

(Student)

(Cooperating Teacher) (School)

(Teacher's Home Address)

(Social Security Number)

School Address: _____

School City, State, Zip: _____

School Phone: _____

Cooperating Teacher's Signature