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Trinity Western University
Political Studies /
International Studies
Student Practicum
Handbook

POLS 361-369

POLITICAL STUDIES PRACTICUM

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR STUDENT PRACTIUMS

Introduction to TWU and the Political Studies / International Studies Practicum

Trinity Western University is a not-for-profit Christian liberal arts university based in Langley British Columbia. A member of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, it is a fully accredited degree granting institution with over 3,500 students.

International Studies majors must take at least one of the following: the Laurentian Leadership Centre Program in Ottawa, a CCCU study abroad semester, a semester at Lithuania Christian College, or one TWU travel study course. This requirement is waived if students can provide evidence of previous international experience or of extensive Model United Nations experience.

All Political Studies majors are required to complete at least 3 sem. hrs of Political Studies Practicum. A maximum of 6 sem. hrs may be taken for the major; a total of 9 sem. hrs may be taken as part of the overall degree.

Prerequisite(s): Honours, major, concentration, or minor in Political Studies or International Studies. Students require second year standing or higher, 6 sem. hrs of Political Studies, and at least a C+ average.

The Political Studies / International Studies Practicum (1-3sem. Hrs)

Coordinated by the Discipline's program coordinator, the Political Studies / International Studies Practicum offers students the opportunity for experiential learning through exploring a complex set of new experiences in a practical work setting.

An "practicum" is defined as a structured and supervised professional work-learn experience within an approved government office, non-profit organization, or business for which a student can earn academic credit. The "hands on" training at the work site provides a chance for students to apply theoretical knowledge to actual situations. The learning which results not only increases the student's understanding of the field, but also enhances his/her academic experience by providing new perspectives.

As an intern, the student is involved in a unique 3 way partnership that includes the student, the approved practicum supervisor and the program's director. While Political Studies / International Studies students will be "ambassadors" for the Political Studies / International Studies program, they will not be representing the university in any official capacity.

The following points address some frequently asked questions about the internships:

a) Remuneration and Academic Credit

Normally a student's Practicum is done on a voluntary basis. It provides students with the opportunity to earn up to 6 semester hours of academic credits for their major & an additional 3 credit hours towards their degree at TWU. A practicum can be registered as a combination of 1 semester hour credit courses, 2 sem. hr courses or 3 sem. hr courses. Questions about academic credit should be taken up with the Political Studies program coordinator or with the student's academic advisor at TWU. Sometimes a practicum supervisor may wish to give the student intern an honorarium at the conclusion of his or her practicum. This is acceptable.

Students may also register an appropriate summer or in-term part time employment opportunity for academic credit as a practicum, having **first** received approval from the political studies coordinator. If the student has been accepted as a part time employee (summer or in-term job) the employer/practicum supervisor can either pay the student intern an honorarium at the conclusion of his/her practicum or according to standard pay periods.

b) Appropriate Assignments

Because academic credit is involved, it is expected that practicum tasks will be of a substantive and academically relevant nature. While the specific nature of tasks and final product will differ between offices, work should challenge the student intern to think and provide learning opportunities. While some administrative and clerical work is part of every job (from corporate CEO or political Chief of Staff down), it is expected that such tasks will not be the primary component of an intern's daily work. Generally, expectations about the nature of work in a practicum should be clear from initial conversations with the supervisor and formalized in the Practicum Learning Agreement. Students having concerns about assigned tasks, however, should raise the issue with the program coordinator as soon as possible.

c) Hours of Work

Academic credit for a practicum is calculated by a formula: each semester credit hour requires 39-40 hours of work. Hence a 1 sem. credit hr requires 40 hours of work; a 2 sem. credit hr requires 78-80 hrs; a 3 semester credit hr practicum requires 116-120 hrs. Students should make work period arrangements with their supervisor. The supervisor is asked to bear in mind, however, that students during term may also be balancing a challenging class load along with their practicum expectations.

d) Insurance Coverage

Sometimes supervisors ask for confirmation that student interns are fully insured against accident and liability. As registered full time students at Trinity Western University, all Practicum interns are covered by the university's insurance policy. Upon request, the program director can arrange for supervisors to receive written confirmation of coverage.

e) Confidentiality

In allowing a student intern into their offices, supervisors are agreeing to grant a stranger access to their physical space, equipment, files, and most importantly to the corporate culture of their organization. Therefore, it is essential that student interns show discretion and high regard for confidentiality in their dealings with individuals outside the office. In preparing their practicum journal, students should ensure that they share enough context with the program coordinator that he/she can fully assess their learning experience, yet at the same time ensure that sensitive details are not divulged.

Finding the Internship

The POLS / INT STUDIES program coordinator will do his/her best to provide internship options as well as direct referrals for students to potential supervisors within the student's chosen field of endeavour. Students are more than welcome to suggest a possible placement that they themselves have uncovered. Generally the program coordinator will seek from prospective supervisors their agreement in principle to take a student, and will then arrange a meeting—either by telephone or in person where possible-- between the supervisor and a specific student. This interview is important because it allows both parties to discuss projects and work plan, and to ensure personal compatibility (at least in so much as this can be done in a brief, sometimes long distance meeting). At the very least, it ensures that the student will have some personal contact with the organization before showing up on the first day. The practicum is confirmed when both parties indicate to the program coordinator that they wish to proceed.

While the program coordinator strives to see internships arranged as far as possible in advance of the start date, students should recognize that supervisors often do not know until close to the start date whether they will be able to participate in the practicum program. Availability of office space and a computer terminal, the amount of work expected to be on the agenda, a supervisor's travel schedule: these are all examples of things which inform a supervisor's decision, yet are often not known until the last minute. Students should, therefore, be aware that it is not unusual for placements to be confirmed only just prior to the practicum startup date. While this is not ideal, it reflects the reality of political, government and business office life, and still permits students to achieve their required practicum hours.

Establishing the Practicum Learning Agreement

The Learning Agreement is fundamental to the internship experience since it sets out what the student can expect from the practicum supervisor, and what the supervisor can expect from the student, and it permits the program coordinator to understand the direction of the practicum. Generally, the student will discuss learning and employment objectives with both the program coordinator and the Practicum Supervisor. The Student Intern and the Practicum Supervisor will determine the objectives and "job description." This could include practicum responsibilities, tasks, projects to be completed, new assignments, acquisition of new knowledge or skills, and types of learning opportunities. The more concrete and specific the Learning Agreement, the more useful it is to the student. However, it is recognized that the direction of a Practicum can

change significantly within the allotted time period, so the Agreement is understood as an expression of intent and not an immutable contract.

The Practicum Learning Agreement must be completed by the student, signed by the supervisor, and submitted to the program coordinator for approval not later than the end of the second week of the Practicum. If the student is unable to get the supervisor to discuss or sign the document by that date, then he or she must seek an extension from the program coordinator. Unjustified failure to meet this deadline may result in a practicum failure.

Summary of Student Intern Responsibilities/Expectations

1. Complete the Practicum *Learning Agreement Form* and obtain approval thereof from the program coordinator by the end of week 2 of the practicum.
2. Comply with the practicum supervisor's rules and regulations: report for work on time; complete assignments competently; maintain a professional attitude and appearance.
3. Keep a daily journal of activities and reflections upon the practicum experience. This is an essential part of the practicum. Please see the fuller discussion elsewhere in this handbook. The journal must be submitted to the program coordinator upon request during the semester for periodic checks, and the final journal submitted no later than one week after the completion of the practicum.
4. Keep a record of days and hours worked. At the end of the practicum have this time sheet signed by the practicum supervisor. The final log is to be given to the program coordinator and is due one week after the completion of the practicum. If a student is taking a combination of practicum each practicum requires the signature of the supervisor on the time worksheet.
5. Report on your progress to the program coordinator regularly during the practicum period, and notify him/her immediately if you have any concerns relating to the placement (e.g. required hours of work, amount of work expected outside of office hours, nature of work).
6. Verify that the practicum supervisor returns the supervisor's evaluation form to the program coordinator. The program coordinator will use this when evaluating your work for your final pass/fail grade.
7. Notify the program coordinator of any unavoidable absences, changes in job status, or if any difficulties are experienced with the practicum site or supervisor.
8. Upon completion of the full Practicum (1-9 hrs) write a short essay (750 words) in which you summarize your practicum experience and reflect on what you have learned. This needs to be submitted to the Practicum coordinator within two weeks of the conclusion of the full practicum experience.

Receiving Academic Credit for Your Practicum

Upon completion of the required hours of practicum, the submission of a daily journal and other assignments as may be required to the program coordinator, and receipt of the practicum supervisor's evaluation, the program coordinator will assign a pass/fail grade for the submitted semester hours of credit for the practicum.

Guidelines for Supervision of Student Interns

1. Develop a position description for the student intern and the institution on the "*Practicum Learning Agreement Form*." If the Practicum has not been approved by the program's coordinator, the practicum supervisor and student intern must obtain this approval before any work begins.
2. Provide an orientation for the student to the work site. Introduce the student to the organization, the employees, the physical layout, and their responsibilities. Be sure the student intern knows the general philosophy and procedures of operation for the organization as a whole. Inform the student intern of rules and expectations to be followed.
3. In principle there should be an opportunity for either a site visit or phone contact for the Political Studies / International Studies program coordinator. Sometimes the program coordinator may wish to initially visit the work site to judge its appropriateness for the Practicum experience.
4. Provide a written evaluation of the student's performance at the end of the Practicum. An evaluation form will be attached to the *Practicum Learning Agreement Form*.
6. Verify hours worked on the student's time sheet for each Practicum.

Practicum Evaluations

The following are some of the criteria which the program coordinator will use in evaluating the practicum.

1. Hours worked: did the student complete the required number of hours of work, and have the hours been properly documented?
2. Supervisor's comments: How has the practicum supervisor assessed the student's professionalism and quality of work? What overall mark did the supervisor assign for the student's overall performance? The pass/fail final grade will reflect an acceptable level of student competence and learning.
3. Quality and academic appropriateness of the work performed. In particular, did the work conform to the plan outlined in the initial learning agreement (which had been approved by the student, supervisor and program coordinator)?

4. The Practicum Journal (see below).

The Practicum Journal

The Journal is by far the most important record of the Practicum and will be given the most weight in determining a pass/fail grade.

A successful journal should include a log of the student's day to day activities in the practicum in sufficient detail to give a good idea of what is being accomplished and learned (always respecting office confidentiality, as required). However, it must do more than chronicle events. It must also provide insight into how the student is interacting with his or her duties, colleagues and office environment by recording questions, perceptions, feelings, and insights. What is being learned? How is the student's thinking changing over the course of the practicum? What is the student learning: about office work; about personal interaction in a work environment; about the specific material being dealt with; about him or herself? See the "Suggested Format for the Practicum Journal" (below) for further ideas.

Finally, the Practicum Journal must be complete and consistent. There should be entries for every work day, and these entries should consistently (no, not every single day—that's not what life is like) show reflection and insight. These insights are within the reach of everyone; no matter what is happening at the practicum (sometimes "bad" experiences are the most valuable learning experiences). However, discipline in writing the journal when thoughts and experiences are fresh is essential to producing an authentic and insightful work.

The journal must be submitted to the program coordinator for review as required at intervals throughout the practicum. The final journal, along with supporting time sheets, is due no later than one week after the conclusion of the practicum. If a student's journal has not been received by the program coordinator by the mutually agreed upon time, a grade of F will be assigned to the practicum.

Suggested Format for the Practicum Journal

As noted above, a practicum journal is much more than a bare statement of "I did this, and I did that." Rather, it must document the variety of learning experiences which the student has encountered. The student has much latitude to decide how best to write the journal. However, the following represents a possible format:

1. **The Log**: The log requires the intern to say concisely and specifically just what was done each day in the work experience. It is similar to the "who, what and where" in the lead paragraph of a news story. The log requires accurate, factual recording of what was done or accomplished in a particular time frame.
2. **Recording of Questions**: Each intern should record two or three questions a day—something they find interesting and relevant. The questions can be directed at anyone in

the organization or at the field site. (Answers are not expected in the journal, only questions).

3. **Recording or Perceptions**: The detailed recording of perceptions in the journal helps the intern assemble, organize and begin to make sense of his/her own observations and experiences. “What did you see?” “What did you observe?” “What patterns begin to emerge in the course of events in your work assignment?” “How does your work assignment fit into the organizational system,” etc.
4. **Recording of Feelings**: What are the student’s feelings toward the practicum, the work they are doing, and the organizational system within which they work (positive or negative)?
5. **Learning**: What did the student learn about leadership as a result of their working experience? This section could include factual information as well as an evaluation of observed processes, office operations, or the role of one’s supervisor.

Practicum Dress Expectations

When attending their practicum, Political Studies and International Studies students are participating in professional work environments and must fit the part. Remember that people will judge you on how you look. Only in rare cases will you ever hear it commented on, but your manner of dress will help to determine how seriously others take you, and consequently the sort of expectations that they have for you and the sort of tasks that will be assigned.

Of course, different offices have different cultures. A parliamentary office will, for example, tend to be more formal than a high tech work place. Some parliamentary offices will be more formal than others; and sometimes the same office will be more or less formal depending on factors such as whether or not the “boss” is in town.

As a “rookie” your only way to navigate the unspoken rules is to observe what others in the office wear. As a general rule, try to fit in—not to be the best dressed (i.e. flashy or expensive) or the worst dressed—but remember that it will always be better to err on the side of being overdressed (i.e. too formal) than underdressed. And, when in doubt, ask your supervisor.

As a guide, however, here are the dress expectations as set out in the Hudson’s Bay Company corporate guide:

Female

What is acceptable:

- Suits, blazers
- Dresses
- Skirts, culottes or skorts
- Tailored pants, casual pants, chinos
- Blouses, shirts, dressy denim shirts
- Sweaters
- Turtleneck, mock neck or polo shirts
- Hosiery (at all times)
- Dressy shoes, loafers, dressy casual boots

Restrictions:

- Micro-mini skirts are not permitted
- Stirrup styles, jump-suits, evening wear, halters, tube tops, tank tops, or any garment which is sleeveless, strapless, backless, or low cut are not permitted
- Fabrics should be those traditionally acceptable for business: corduroy, denim, or sheers are not permitted
- Bare legs are not permitted
- T-shirts with logos are not permitted

Aesthetics:

- Cosmetics should be worn in a neat, professional way. There should be no extremes in colors or application.
- Fingernails should be kept clean and presentable.
- In offices where public representation is important, body piercing and tattoos will not be regarded as appropriate.

Hair Styling

- Hair should be kept clean, neatly combed and styled. Extreme uneven or irregular styles are unacceptable.
- Hair colour should be natural looking; it should be well maintained and not include extremes in dying, bleaching, or colouring.

Fragrances and Deodorant

- Daily contact with fellow associates requires the use of an antiperspirant or deodorant
- The use of strong, heavy scents and fragrances is discouraged.

Male

What is acceptable:

- Suits
- Sport jacket or blazers
- Vests
- Casual pants, chinos, tailored pants
- Dress shirt & tie (tie is optional)
- Banded collar shirts

- Sweaters
- Socks to be worn at all times
- Dress shoes, loafers, dressy casual boots

Restrictions:

- Fabrics should be those traditionally acceptable for business: corduroy or denim are not permitted
- Shoes without socks are not permitted, hosiery must be worn at all times
- T-shirts with logos are not permitted
- Golf shirts

Aesthetics:

- Moustaches, beards, and sideburns are acceptable provided that they are kept clean, short, and neatly trimmed.
- Fingernails should be kept clean and presentable
- In offices where public representation is important, body piercing and tattoos will not be regarded as appropriate.

Hair Styling

- Hair should be kept clean, neatly combed and styled. Extreme uneven or irregular styles are unacceptable.
- Hair colour should be natural looking; it should be well maintained and not include extremes in dying, bleaching, or colouring.

Fragrances and Deodorant

- Daily contact with fellow associates requires the use of an antiperspirant or deodorant
- The use of strong, heavy scents and fragrances is discouraged.

**THE POLITICAL STUDIES / INTERNATIONAL STUDIES PRACTICUM
LEARNING AGREEMENT**

A. Registration Information to be completed by Student Intern

Student Intern _____

Degree Major _____

Third Year Fourth Year Other

B. Practicum Supervisor’s Information—to be completed by Student Intern & Practicum Supervisor

Name of Practicum Supervisor: _____ Title: _____

Name of Organization: _____

Address: _____ Tel: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Practicum Start date: _____ End date: _____

Title of Practicum position (if applicable) _____

C. Academic Component Description – to be completed by Student Intern, the Political Studies / International Studies Program Coordinator and the Practicum Supervisor

Taking into consideration discussion with the student about his or her interests and objectives, please describe the practicum job responsibilities, tasks, and learning opportunities for the Student Intern (where possible, please include anticipated activities, projects, meetings, training, etc.). Attach printed sheet if desired.

D. Agreements and Signatures

***Practicum Supervisor:** *I have discussed this practicum with the Student Intern and we have agreed upon the assigned work components appearing on this form. I agree to: provide assistance including any necessary training and consultation to the Student Intern in order to enable him/her to advance toward his/her learning goals and objectives, provide an orientation concerning our organizational policies and procedures, meet with the Student Intern regularly, and provide a written evaluation of the student intern to the Political Studies / International Studies Program Coordinator.*

Name of Supervisor (please print)

Signature of Supervisor

Date

Practicum Program Coordinator: *I have discussed the academic/experiential component of this practicum with the Student Intern, and I accept this as a work plan for the Political Studies / International Studies Program. I further agree to meet periodically with the Student Intern to discuss the practicum experience and I will conduct an assessment/evaluation of the practicum experience.*

Program Coordinator's signature

Date

Student Intern: *I concur with and accept the academic and work assignments indicated above. I will complete all work and academic assignments to the best of my ability. I accept the obligation of confidentiality in my work and will familiarize myself with and adhere to the organization's relevant policies/procedures and appropriate standards of conduct.*

Student Intern signature

Date

Evaluation of Student Performance

Student's Name: _____

Position Title: _____ Department: _____

Name of Organization: _____

Address: _____

Semester: Fall ¹ Spring ¹ Summer

Work Period (Dates): _____ to _____ Total Hours Worked: _____

Note to Practicum Supervisor:

Please complete this form and share your comments with the student at the conclusion of the Practicum. This is an important part of his or her learning experience. Feel free to add additional comments or observations on a separate sheet.

The form should be returned to the Practicum program Coordinator via the student.

1. What specific assignments did the student complete during this work period and how much time was devoted to each?
2. Was the student able to accomplish the duties/responsibilities stated in the position description?
3. What new skills were developed?
4. Would you recommend this student for another work period? Yes No
5. What training and skills development would you recommend this student take in preparation for more advanced responsibilities?
6. Have you discussed these recommendations with the student? Yes No

	Superior	Above Average	Satisfactory	Below Average	Poor
HUMAN RELATIONS Cooperative, courteous, tactful, poised, mature and friendly with customers, associates, and supervisors.					
ATTITUDE Ambitious, enthusiastic, sincere.					
PERFORMANCE Dependable, prompt, and has appropriate work habits. Uses common sense and good judgment.					
PERSONAL APPEARANCE Dresses appropriately and exhibits good grooming.					
CAPABILITIES AND ABILITIES Is quick to understand new, involved or difficult problems. Is creative and logical in thought. Is able to organize/promote concerted action when needed. Demonstrates competent oral and written communications skills. Is thorough and accurate with regular improvement in work.					
Overall work performance of the student: (circle one) Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High					

Student's Strengths:

Suggested Areas of Improvement Needed:

Supervisor's Signature

Supervisor's Title

Phone

Date

POLITICAL STUDIES / INTERNATIONAL STUDIES PRACTICUM MONTHLY TOTALS TIME SHEET

Student Information:

Name: _____

Term and Date: _____

Practicum Site: _____

Practicum Supervisor: _____

Time Card Information: (to be completed in ink)

Summary of Monthly Hours:

Month	# of Hours
Term Total	

I certify that I have worked the hours indicated above.

Signature of Student

Date