Justice Studies Department, University of Regina

Practicum Program Planning during the Pandemic (June 11, 2020)

Our Justice Studies Department has made the decision to NOT cancel our practicum courses – JS 290 and JS 490 for the fall term. This decision was made after extensive consultations with students, health and safety professionals, other practicum placement programs, university administrators, and placement organizations. We have decided not to cancel placements because we know there will be both short-term and long-term negative impacts on students (e.g. learning new skills, securing jobs after graduation, etc.). A recent study released by Statistics Canada makes this clear (see Study: Work-integrated learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Statistics Canada, May 2020, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200525/dq200525a-eng.htm ). Further, we are aware that organizations still want to offer placement opportunities to students and that students also wish to have the experience of working with these organizations. However, we are also aware that there will likely not be the same number and type of pre-pandemic opportunities available to students.

1. Important principles and considerations that will guide our decision-making during the pandemic

a) University directives – the UofR has made the following very clear:
   - Your health and well-being is paramount.
   - If placement organizations believe they can provide meaningful experiences for students like you, then they will be considered.
   - Placement organizations must complete the 2020 Student Health and Safety Checklist and demonstrate to Mr. Flomo, Placement Coordinator, that they have the equipment and training protocols regarding social distancing, good hygiene, etc. available for you.
   - You must be fully informed about all risks of face-to-face placements and must be made aware that your placement duties may need to be modified as the pandemic continues to unfold. Further, it is important that you, your practicum organization and Mr. Flomo recognize that the educational placement may need to be suspended or terminated as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency.
   - You must agree to comply with the applicable COVID-19 protocols and regulations in your practicum organization.
   - There will be no international placements this fall due to serious legal, insurance and health risks.

b) JS Department principles and considerations due to the pandemic:
   - There may be flexibility in the start and end dates of placements as well as careful consideration of hours required to complete placements in order to ensure you are not

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Please be aware that the ongoing implications of the coronavirus pandemic are still unknown and we may need to revisit this decision in the future.
academically disadvantaged if there are pandemic-related changes required mid-semester.

- We will have some ability to shift learning activities for you as circumstances change. For example, if you need to shift away from your face-to-face placement, virtual simulations, role-plays and video-analyses may be introduced. Further, you may be able to finish some of your work hours at home.

- There will be clear communication with you about all the risks associated with whatever choices you make.

- If you are on track to finish your degree requirements on Dec. 31, 2020, you will be given priority access to 490 placements. If you require 290 this fall because you will be finishing your degree requirements in April 2021, you will be considered a priority.

- Mr. Flomo will be in constant communication with students this fall in order to be aware of any issues that may require attention as they arise.

We will be using these principles and considerations in all our practicum decision-making. Please note that these principles and considerations do not replace the material in the Practicum Manual, but rather should be read in conjunction with it.

2. There are options for students registered in 290 and 490 for the fall 2020 semester

If you have not already received confirmation about a placement from Mr. Flomo, you are encouraged to think carefully about the following options and where you feel most comfortable.

**Option 1 – face-to-face (in-person) placements**

- These placements will go ahead as usual however, these organizations must have proven to Mr. Flomo that they have Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and training available for you.

- Some examples of these placement opportunities include: Ranch Ehrlo Society, YWCA women’s shelter, Regina Open Door Society, etc.

- We will have both new and old organizations in the PlacePro database for you to consider. However, placement will be made based on organizational availability.

- This option may shift to remote/virtual during the fall semester depending on how the pandemic unfolds. Mr. Flomo is working on a plan to make this transition as easy as possible and will include information on how to assess and mark you depending on how far along you are in your practicum.

**Option 2 - placements to be undertaken 100% remotely/virtually in the fall of 2020**

- These placements will NOT have any face-to-face activities. All of the students’ work will take place from their own homes but with regular contact with an organization using virtual platforms such as Zoom.

- Some examples of these organizations include: Ministry of Justice, law firms, working with a faculty member on their community-based work, etc.
- Some examples of the type of work that could be done include: research or program evaluations, program standards development, background work for new legislation development, etc.
- Depending on your practicum, your organization may grant you access to the required equipment, software and databases that may be required after receiving security clearance.

Option 3 – postpone taking 290 or 490 until January 2021 and take other courses in the fall of 2020 instead.
- You might feel more comfortable postponing your practicum course to another semester. However, it is noteworthy that information we have from the UofR, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health and the federal government clearly indicate that the timeline on this pandemic is not predictable and we may not see any difference between September 2020 and January 2021 regarding things returning to normal.

Option 4 – we’re doing some creative thinking about other ways to provide practicum experiences for our students. We will let you know about these as we complete them.

The ultimate decision about where you will be placed rests with Mr. Flomo, the Practicum Coordinator. He must balance the following criteria in every placement decision: student interests, the number and types of organizations available, placement site preparedness and safety and the evolution of the pandemic.

In closing, please be sure to read the following documents that are attached to your email that give you more information about your practicum. These documents further explain your rights regarding your practicum placement. These documents will also be posted on the JS Department website:
- 2020 Student Health and Safety Checklist
- Safety and your Co-operative/Practicum Work Experience

If you have any questions/concerns, please contact Mr. David Flomo, david.flomo@uregina.ca