

MA/SID Second-Year The Practicum Track

Six-Month Practicum

The practicum experience is meant to inform the student's master's paper and to align closely with the SID curriculum frameworks. The practicum allows students to examine a significant problem or issue within the broader field of sustainable development through experiential learning. Students will use their practicum experience to develop a consultant's report (i.e., master's paper) in which they identify the development problem or problems the organization tries to address and how its programs or projects could be improved. (See page 19 for specific guidelines related to the consultant's report.) Practicum students may also write a research-based paper with permission of their advisor.

Planning for the Practicum

Practicum Requirements

Like all MA/SID students, practicum students write a second-year proposal in which they identify a development problem. The proposal must be approved and signed by the program director and practicum coordinator prior to the start of the second year. Students must also meet the following requirements for the practicum track:

- Submit a Release & Waiver form and a signed Terms of Reference (TOR) on the organization's letterhead for SID program review and approval
- Enroll as a full-time student in the practicum course HS230a for fall and spring semesters (24 credits)
- Complete a full-time practicum (35–40 hours per week) with a development organization for a minimum of six consecutive months (for international students doing an international practicum, one month can be off-site from the practicum organization). The practicum's start date is typically during the first week of September.
- Meet all required deadlines and milestones during the fall and spring semesters related to writing and submitting the master's paper
- Present at the SID Capstone Seminar and participate in all Capstone events (May 2018)

| Practicum | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Term | Credits |
| Year 1—Fall | 16 min; 20 max |
| Year 2—Spring | 16 min; 20 max |
| Year 2—Fall (practicum) | 12 |
| Year 2—Spring (practicum) | 12 |
| TOTAL | 56–64 CREDITS |

Enrollment Status and Health Insurance for Practicum Students

SID practicum students maintain Brandeis student status by paying a [continuation fee](#) during the fall and spring semesters of their second year. Students are required to maintain their Brandeis [health insurance](#) policy, regardless of their practicum location. Students must register for the field practicum course

(HS230a) as full-time students through the Heller School's Office of Student Records and Enrollment. The practicum course counts for 12 credits each semester and is graded as credit (CR) or no credit (NC).

Visas, Permits, and/or Other Required Documentation for the Practicum

Students are responsible for obtaining required visas, permits, and other documentation, with guidance from the host organization. The host organization must provide any documentation needed to confirm their role. Some host organizations require students to provide proof of enrollment at Brandeis University. See the [Office of the University Registrar](#) page of the Brandeis website for instructions on how to obtain a proof of enrollment letter. Contact Ravi Lakshmikanthan (kanthan@brandeis.edu) at the Heller's Office of Student Records and Enrollment with any questions.

International students on an F-1 visa who are doing practicums in the US or with a US organization cannot begin the practicum until they have met all International Student and Scholars Office (ISSO) requirements, including an approved [CPT form](#). Students should review the visa guidelines on the [Employment/Academic Internships](#) page of the ISSO website and reference the [CPT Application Check List](#). Contact Bonnie Ryle (bryle@brandeis.edu) with any questions related to F-1 visa requirements.

Vaccinations (if applicable for international practicums)

To determine if any health precautions are recommended for travel to the locale of the host organization, students may want to consult the following websites: [Massachusetts General Hospital: Heading Home Healthy](#) or [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

Preparation for the Practicum and Living Abroad

Students may want to invest time in the library and on-line before they depart for their practicums. They can refer to the [Research Guides](#) page of the Brandeis Library website for SID research resources. Reading as much background material as possible on their development problem will result in a better paper and make them a more valuable member of the team at their host organization. Students may also want to research local customs, habits, and etiquette, and reach out to alumni and others who could provide helpful insight to living and working in their practicum location.

Banking and travel documents

Students may want to contact their financial institutions to notify them of their travel plans. This will help to ensure that they have continued access to their accounts. If possible, they should have a back-up credit card and/or emergency cash in case they have any banking issues or lose their credit or debit card.

It's also a good idea for students to prepare their PIN before traveling abroad. Many international ATMs only support four-digit PINs. Students should ensure that their PINs do not begin with a zero, and they should know their PIN by the numbers, as some foreign ATMs do not have letters on the keypads.

As a precaution, students should also make copies of their important documents, including two copies of their passport, credit cards, and other travel documents. It's recommended that they leave one copy with a family member or friend and bring the other copy with them.

The Practicum Experience

Students should begin their practicum during the first week of September 2017. Upon arrival at their practicum location, students may want to take time to learn about the language, culture, and workplace norms. It is always helpful if students can find mentors and peers to help them understand the local traditions and organizational culture. Students may also want to consider the following:

- **Apply what was learned in the classroom.** Students should explore ways to use theories studied and skills developed through coursework.
- **Review academic sources,** including available “gray literature” (e.g., in-house project reports and publications, documents/files) to better understand the institutional mandate, achievements, and constraints of the host organization.
- **Establish rapport with colleagues.** This helps to open doors for support and access to information. Experience of previous students shows that “interrogating” (extracting or pushing for information) does not work, while informal “interviewing” (engaging, dialoging, and exchanging information) is often highly successful.
- **Volunteer to help colleagues.** Besides being generally helpful, students will learn a lot and this may allow them to take on more responsibility.
- **Adopt standards of professionalism.** As in all work, professional behavior is foundational. Organizations are complex, with webs of relationships and unspoken alliances. Understand and respect internal hierarchies. In case of difficult issues related to institutional politics, students should avoid personalization; rather, they should focus on their work, avoiding gossip and personal confrontation. They should try to maintain neutrality, objectivity, and discretion and to keep cordial relationships with everyone. It’s important to be transparent, flexible, respectful, and a team player, eager to learn about institutional and local culture.

Students should also dress appropriately for the workplace, be punctual and dependable, and produce quality deliverables. They should never hesitate to ask questions. If they don’t know or are unsure of something, they should ask their supervisor. Students should remember that they not only are representing SID, the Heller School, and Brandeis University, but also the host organization when they are in the field. The quality of their work and, ultimately, of their master’s paper will demonstrate their capacity as a practitioner with a specialty in sustainable international development.

During the practicum, many students find that they want to adapt their plan or modify the focus of their paper. Students should communicate any proposed changes with their academic advisor. Any unauthorized changes in terms of practicum location, duration, or topical focus may invalidate approval of the student’s practicum.

Tips for Getting the Most out of Your Practicum Experience

- Prepare—review background material on your development issue
- Understand workplace expectations
- Engage—build relationships with your colleagues
- Learn about the language & culture
- Apply what you learned in the classroom
- Take initiative and solicit feedback
- Learn from mistakes (they’re inevitable and part of the learning process)
- Keep a journal—compile observations, gather evidence, and write your reflections

The Host Organization and the Master's Paper

At their host organization, students will professionally fulfill a TOR under the direction of a field supervisor. The focus of their master's paper will be related to this work but will be directed by their SID academic advisor. Although their paper is expected to be of use to their organization, the paper is solely the students' responsibility, is produced on their own time, and should not burden or rely on the support of anyone at the host organization. (The student's field supervisor and others are welcome to help, if they wish, but their support is voluntary.) The practicum student-field supervisor relationship is a professional employee-employer relationship that includes a mentorship component. This means that, with the exception of the master's paper, all work described in the TOR is under the guidance of the student's field supervisor or their designee.

Staying Connected to the SID Community

Students are expected to contact their academic advisors monthly via email or Skype to provide them with updates on their practicum and to communicate expectations related to the development of the master's paper. It's important to establish a timeline for the development of their paper early in the academic year.

Students should also communicate every five to six weeks with the practicum coordinator (via email, Skype, or WhatsApp), providing a brief update on their practicum experience including the following information:

- Describe current assignments and responsibilities
- Share experiences that were particularly rewarding
- Describe experiences that were disappointing or frustrating
- Highlight skills that were learned or applied
- Describe expectations for the following reporting period (i.e., the next four to six weeks)
- Share any professional or personal successes, concerns, and/or challenges

Practicum students may also reach out (via email, phone, Skype, or WhatsApp) to the practicum coordinator at any time and as needed. The practicum coordinator will also have designated office hours one evening per week (TBD).

Students may also want to initiate a Facebook group or other method to stay in touch with each other while working in the field. The program will also offer opportunities over the course of the practicum period for students to engage in online small group discussions.

Four webinars will also be held during the 2017–2018 academic year (dates/times TBD) on topics that include:

- Research, Resources, and Citations
- Master's Paper Tutorial
- Critical Thinking
- Q&A on the Master's Paper

Being Prepared for the Unexpected

In the case of an emergency or other event that needs immediate attention, students should contact the SID practicum coordinator (mpoor@brandeis.edu). An emergency phone number will be provided to students prior to the start of their practicum

Emergency medical and travel insurance

If there is no time to contact the practicum coordinator due to the nature of the emergency, students should contact the ACE Travel Assistance Program/Europe Assistance in one of the following ways: Toll-free in the US or Canada at 1.800.243.6124 or collect outside the US at 1.202.659.7803. Their email address is OPS@europassistance-usa-com.

Brandeis University is contracted with ACE American Insurance Company to provide assistance to students doing international practicums or internships. The following benefits are provided: Emergency medical evacuation (100% of covered expenses); repatriation of remains (100% of covered expenses); security evacuation political (\$100,000 maximum); and security evacuation natural disaster (services only—this service will be billable). Students should contact the SID program coordinator with any questions or concerns, and include this benefit when composing the risk assessment and analysis section for their second-year proposal. Information about ACE can also be found on the website: <http://heller.brandeis.edu/students/academics/ma-sid/second-year/index.html>.

Registering with Home Embassy

Students may also want to register with their home Embassies upon arrival in their practicum countries to receive updates about local safety conditions.

Evaluations

Midterm and final online evaluation forms will be sent directly to the student's supervisor for their feedback on the student's job performance and professional growth. Students will also be asked to complete a brief online assessment of their practicum experience at the end of their practicum.

APPENDIX C: SID Practicum Checklist

| SID Practicum Checklist | |
|---|----------|
| Activity | ✓ |
| Identify development question or issue for in-depth examination | |
| Research organizations actively working on development problem or issue | |
| Approach several organizations (via phone and/or email inquiries, formal application process, etc.) | |
| Secure host organization for practicum | |
| Negotiate a terms of reference (TOR) with host organization | |
| Obtain any required visa, permits, or other travel documents (including emergency travel & medical insurance) | |
| International students on an F-1 visa who are doing a practicum in the US or with a US organization have met all ISSO requirements, including an approved CPT form | |
| Develop proposal/description of practicum for SID program review (deadline for submission July 1, 2017) | |
| Complete release & waiver form | |
| Submit signed TOR, Release & Waiver form to practicum coordinator by May 15, 2017 (for a summer practicum) and July 1, 2017 (for a fall practicum) | |
| Register for practicum course through the Heller School's Office of Student Records and Enrollment | |
| Notify financial institutions of travel plans; ensure ATM has four-digit PIN; pack extra credit card and/or emergency cash | |
| Make extra copies of important documents (e.g., passport, credit cards, and other travel documents) — leave one copy with family member or friend and bring one copy with you | |
| Check in with academic advisor during the practicum via email, phone, or Skype | |
| Check in with practicum coordinator during the practicum via email, phone, or Skype | |
| Ensure practicum supervisor completes your online performance evaluation | |

Practicum Learning Outcomes

Practicum Learning Outcomes

Students who do a practicum will develop a range of skills and varying levels of content knowledge and expertise, and they will have different overall experiences based on where their organization is located and the type of organization for whom they work. However, the value of the experiential learning and training opportunity extends to all students and includes the following learning objectives:

- The ability to translate into practice the concepts and principles learned in the classroom
- A broader and deeper understanding of the development problem or issue and the context in which it is situated
- Recognition of the challenges faced by the development organization and the capacity to develop recommendations for improvement
- Professional development through relationship building and applied knowledge, skills, and experience in the work place

Anticipated Outcomes: Practical Skills

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving