

Recording Practicum Hours: Help for Psychology Graduate Students Seeking Internships

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The predoctoral internship process is a required hurdle for those students seeking licensure after graduation. Much literature has focused on the difficulties of the predoctoral internship application process and ways of making this process more manageable and successful (e.g., Mellott, Arden, & Cho, 1997). Because of the larger number of applicants than internship positions available, making certain the application itself is detailed and accurate is a necessity (Mellott et al., 1997).

In recent years, the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) has worked to promote the use of a standardized form for internship application (Holaday & McPhearson, 1996). This standardization has greatly simplified the application process. Applicants can find this form online at www.appic.org/i03forms.html#aapi. All internship applicants must provide precise information regarding direct service hours, support activities such as chart review and planning, supervision received, treatment settings worked in, and assessment instruments administered (APPIC, 2001).

Given the specific nature of reporting practicum hours and activities, in addition to the difficulties sometimes encountered in maintaining these records over the course of several years, efforts have focused recently on finding an easier means of keeping track of these hours (e.g., Herschell & McNeil, 2000).

Herschell and McNeil developed several forms, including an hours log, code form, and client log to be used with Microsoft Access 97. The current article discusses an alternative to this form, based in Microsoft Excel, a program that may be in more widespread use among some graduate students.

The practicum form system presented here is computer-based, although forms can be printed and used in a paper format. The spreadsheet form is formatted into the categories listed in the AAPIC Application for Psychology Internship (APPIC, 2001) for ease of transfer of information. Copies of the Practicum Hours Data spreadsheet and the Weekly Activities sheet are included in this article as Figure 1 (Practicum Hours Data spreadsheet) and Figure 2 (Weekly Activities sheet). Both forms are available online at www.uky.edu/Education/EDP/cnpsred.html.

This Web site contains links to a Practicum Hours Data spreadsheet for recording service hours and a Weekly Activities sheet for noting client characteristics, diagnostic codes, tests administered, activities performed (e.g., individual adult session, group therapy, supervision), and any other relevant information.

The Practicum Hours Data spreadsheet provides users with a quick and easy means of summing up hours for each section of the APPIC form: therapy experience, support activities, and supervision received. Subtotals for these areas are readily retrieved from the spreadsheet and an overall total for practicum hours is calculated on a weekly and semester or quarterly basis. The Practicum Hours spreadsheet formulas loaded into the file automatically total previous practicum hours at the same site (Column B) along with current site practicum hours (Column C), so that cumulative hours can be obtained (Column D). For each week of a semester or quarter, students can enter their hours for all practicum activities on the appropriate row and column of the spreadsheet.

For descriptive purposes, students should update the Weekly Activities sheet on a frequent basis so all information is accurate. The Practicum Hours file contains two separate spreadsheets, which can be used for fall and spring semesters at the same site or can be modified for schools on a quarter system. With modest editing, the spreadsheet becomes a general reporting form for each of the student's predoctoral practicum experiences.

The forms presented here are a useful means of recording practicum hours and maintaining detailed records of practicum activities and client characteristics. For those who have already begun accumulating clinical hours, updating previously hand-recorded practicum hours information into a spreadsheet format can be accomplished relatively easily.

Finally, for individuals already on internship and who may seek a postdoctoral internship, a companion spreadsheet has been prepared for recording internship hours. The psychologist seeking either a postdoctoral internship or presenting their complete record to a state board may use this spreadsheet. This internship hours form is available at

www.uky.edu/Education/EDP/internshiphrs.xls. With some small amount of practice, the forms will become an effective tool for accurate reporting. Now that APPIC has provided a more standardized method of applying for internships, having a similar methodical way of recording this information for ease of transfer can save much time during an already stressful application process.

References

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