

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF APPLIED AND PROFESSIONAL  
PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM

PRACTICUM HANDBOOK



GSAPP's School Psy.D. program is:  
APA Accredited until American  
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Commission on Accreditation  
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GSAPP's School Psy.D. program  
has full approval from  
The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)

**RUTGERS SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY**  
**PROGRAM PRACTICUM HANDBOOK**

**Overview**

While enrolled in the School Psychology Program at the Graduate School for Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP) at Rutgers University, students complete practica that are sequential, cumulative, and graded in complexity in order to achieve competencies designated by core faculty. These practica experiences begin in the second semester of the first year and continue for a minimum of two additional years. In total, students will complete a minimum of two-and-a-half years and 1150 hours of practica training, although advanced level students (i.e., previous Master's degree) may be able to waive some of these requirements.

During the first school-based practicum, taken in the Spring semester of the first year in the program, students are placed in one of our partner school districts. Activities include observation of a range of school structures and processes, such as regular education classes, special education classes, resource rooms, meetings and consultation sessions between school psychologists and teachers, meetings between school psychologists and parents, child study team meetings, meetings of the intervention and referral services team, and school-wide faculty meetings. Students also engage in psychological assessment activities and report writing, and may gain initial experience with providing counseling services.

During the second year practicum, students continue their placements in one of the partner school districts. They complete full psychological evaluations, participate in child study team meetings and intervention and referral services team meetings, engage in consultation with teachers and parents, and implement evidence-based prevention and intervention programs for individuals and/or groups.

In the third year of the program, students enroll in advanced practica that may involve work in the partner school districts and/or a specialized practicum in an alternative practicum setting. Consistent with the sequential and cumulative aspects of the practicum experience, the goal of the third year of practicum is to refine professional practice skills, with an emphasis on systems and preventive interventions, and/or to develop advanced specialty skills. Those continuing their work in partner school districts will develop and implement intervention or prevention programs for small groups, classrooms or schools, and engage in the full range of services provided by practicing school psychologists. Those working in an alternative practicum setting may seek to develop advanced skills in working with populations such as autistic children, or families of children with developmental disabilities. They also may develop advanced skills in providing a specific type of psychotherapeutic intervention, such a cognitive-behavior therapy, or they may develop advanced skills in systems-level prevention in schools.

Because practicum experiences are integrated with coursework beginning in their initial and subsequent practica, students are afforded the opportunity to obtain an in-depth understanding of the roles and functions of school psychologists and of the context of the

school, and to increase their level of competence in professional practice through the delivery of psychological services in a school setting. This is done in a sequential manner as described above. As students take professional practice courses, they are provided with opportunities in the practicum setting to use the skills learned in those courses, to refine skills learned in previously completed courses, and to integrate multiple skills in order to solve problems. Along with each practicum course and the individual supervision by doctoral level psychologists that is typically provided at the practicum site, students participate in a Group Supervision course for each semester in which they are enrolled in practicum. This supervision course provides weekly group supervision of students by School Psychology Program faculty members and aims to provide input and feedback regarding student practicum work, to strengthen the professional identity of students as a school psychologist, and to enhance student self-awareness and understanding of the self as a mediating variable in the delivery of services.

Through this work, students develop initial competence in all basic aspects of the professional functioning of school psychologists, develop a data-based approach to professional problem solving, develop an understanding of the importance of using empirically supported interventions, learn to integrate the various aspects of school psychology practice to deal with problems of students in educational settings, and are exposed to a variety of school-based issues that impact the development of children and youth.

## SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM AIMS AND COMPETENCIES

Students are evaluated by field-based supervisors across a series of competencies embedded within 10 key aims.

**Aim 1 (Research)**: To understand and engage competently in research and other scholarly activities that contribute new scientific, psychological, or professional knowledge.

**Competency 1.1** Selects and implements research and evaluation methods appropriate for defining and clarifying problems, formulating research questions and hypotheses, and generating new scientific or professional knowledge.

**Competency 1.2** Critically interprets, uses, and disseminates research and empirical findings to address problems, decision situations, or gaps in knowledge.

**Aim 2 (Ethics and Legal Standards)**: To understand and apply ethical and legal principles to the practice of psychology in schools and other professional psychology contexts.

**Competency 2.1** Demonstrates knowledge of and adherence to APA ethical guidelines, relevant laws governing psychological practices, and a sound ethical decision-making process to resolve ethical dilemmas and conflicts.

**Aim 3 (Individual and Cultural Diversity)**: To display adequate knowledge and professional skills to address issues of human diversity, especially in terms of students in schools, and to develop skills for working with individuals and groups from diverse racial, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic, gender-related, and other backgrounds.

**Competency 3.1** Demonstrates knowledge of current theoretical and empirical foundations and models of human diversity, and an awareness of how personal biases and cultural histories influence interactions with individuals and groups.

**Competency 3.2** Demonstrates the ability to consider and integrate cultural and diversity concepts in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs, products, and services that relate to professional psychology practice and research.

**Aim 4 (Professional Values and Attitudes)**: To maintain self-awareness, beliefs, and behaviors that reflect the values and principles of school psychology.

**Competency 4.1** Exhibits appropriate professional attitudes and behaviors, including respect and concern for the welfare and well-being of others, personal accountability, and maintaining high standards for professional practices.

**Competency 4.2** Exhibits behaviors that reflect an openness and responsiveness to feedback, and a desire to maintain self-awareness of and active engagement in professional and personal growth activities.

**Aim 5 (Communication and Interpersonal Skills)**: To demonstrate effective interpersonal and communication skills within schools, other professional practice settings, and community contexts, in the service of psychological development and educational achievement of children and adolescents.

**Competency 5.1** Develops and maintains effective relationships with a wide range of individuals including students, teachers, parents, other health service professionals, and other stakeholders in the provision of psychological services.

**Competency 5.2** Demonstrates skills in producing, comprehending, and integrating oral, nonverbal, and written communications across a range of situations, populations, and systems.

**Aim 6 (Assessment)**: To demonstrate knowledge of and skills in administering and interpreting evidence-based assessments.

**Competency 6.1** Formulates and conducts psychological assessments that are technically adequate, accurate, identify needs and strengths, and inform decision-making and interventions.

**Competency 6.2** Interprets, uses, and communicates assessment results that guide case conceptualization, classification, and recommendations, and that demonstrate understanding of the multiple systems impacting student functioning.

**Aim 7 (Intervention)**: To understand and apply evidence-based interventions across a range of professional contexts and populations.

**Competency 7.1** Selects, develops, implements, and evaluates evidence-based interventions in classrooms, schools, and other agencies or mental health organizations that are relevant to the child/adolescent, problem, and context.

**Competency 7.2** Applies the relevant literature to clinical decision making, and modifies evidence-based approaches effectively when empirical data is lacking for a particular population, problem, or context.

**Aim 8 (Supervision)**: To understand and apply knowledge of effective supervision practices regarding the provision of school psychology practices.

**Competency 8.1** Applies knowledge of effective principles of supervision in professional settings and activities with other graduate students in didactic and/or professional contexts.

**Aim 9 (Consultation and interprofessional/interdisciplinary skills)**: Effectively collaborates with professionals and stakeholders to address problems, share knowledge, or to promote high quality professional activities.

**Competency 9.1** Demonstrates knowledge of and respect for the diverse roles, beliefs, and competencies of professionals and stakeholders working in schools.

**Competency 9.2** Provides evidence-based consultation, guidance, and technical assistance to teachers, administrators, parents, other health service professionals to identify educational, social, and emotional problems and needs and to determine effective ways to address those problems and needs.

**Aim 10 (Systems-based practices)**: To understand and apply a systems framework to school psychology research and practice at the individual and organization levels.

**Competency 10.1** Demonstrates an understanding of the impact of multiple systems on student development and functioning, and utilizes this knowledge when delivering assessment, intervention, consultation and/or other professional services.

**Competency 10.2** Demonstrates an understanding of schools and educational environments, including knowledge of principles of quality instruction, the profession of teaching, and regular and special education policy. **(Rev 2017)**

## **The Practicum Experience**

The GSAPP School Psychology Practicum Coordinator will work with all students regarding the school-based and advanced practica experiences. The Coordinator will:

- provide ongoing communication with students and supervisors regarding practicum requirements and student /supervisor performance and activities;
- assign students to the first School Psychology Practicum site based on determination of student interests and fit with district specifications;
- conduct periodic visits to the school district to meet with supervisors and/or students. Some meetings will include both student and supervisor to review student progress and practicum experiences;
- provide additional supervision of student's cases, reports and programs on an as needed basis;
- document student's performance at time of conference and shares any concerns with School Psychology faculty;
- coordinates yearly Supervisor's Luncheon to be held at the Center for Applied Psychology to elicit feedback about practicum;
- attempt to resolve any problems between supervisor and student;
- provide additional support and training opportunities to the district as requested by supervisors;
- create opportunities for supervisors to attend colloquia and workshops at RU at reduced or no-cost;
- review all mid-year and end of year evaluations;
- assign grades for practicum experiences

### **A. School-Based Practicum Experience (9 credits – 3 semesters)**

School psychology students begin their practicum training during the Spring semester of their first year. This is a three-semester sequence of field experience in a local public school district, continuing into the Fall and Spring of the second year of studies. Students accrue experience under the supervision of certified, doctoral level school psychologists.

The overarching goal of the first- and second-year school placement is to familiarize students with the CST and role of school psychologist. This practicum provides experience in those activities for which students must acquire competence to become certified as school psychologists by the New Jersey State Department of Education. Exposure to non-CST roles for school psychologists is possible, but must occur in conjunction to the CST role, in order to meet NJ Dept. of Ed certification requirements. For this practicum, students are placed in partnering school districts by the School Psychology Practicum/Internship Coordinator, based on student interest in: urban/suburban/rural settings, Pre-K, elementary, middle, and high school levels, and professional activities. Prior to placement, the student will generally be required to complete requirements specific to each district to obtain Board of Education approval. The requirements are district specific and may include: fingerprinting, criminal background check, substitute teacher certification, TB testing, and spending part of a day observing in district.

The school-based practicum is required of all beginning level and BA+ students entering the School Psychology program; however, “Advanced” students entering the program with their school psychologist certification may waive these 9 credits of practicum with appropriate documentation. For those students entering the School Psychology program at the BA level and/or without prior graduate training in school psychology, this initial practicum begins in January (Spring term) of the second semester of Year 1 coursework.

While specific practicum experiences are not guaranteed at each site, the faculty recognize the benefit of completing course requirements in the practicum setting. The ability to utilize real-world cases and experiences enhances students’ ability to learn in the classroom, and creates more personally meaningful experiences that bridge theory, research, and practicum. Students are encouraged to advocate for experiences of personal interest in a professional manner and to seek assistance from the School Psychology Practicum/Internship Coordinator when needed.

Students register for 150 hours for practicum and for the appropriate GSAPP-based supervision course. Students are responsible for tracking all of their hours and activities using Time2Track so that both GSAPP and their practicum supervisors can review these hours.

Because of a high level of ethical responsibility to children and families, student readiness to undertake the School-Based Practicum includes: 1) satisfactory completion of Introduction to School Psychology (grade of B or above) as this course introduces students to the New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:14, which addresses special education, 2) satisfactory completion of Cognitive Assessment course (grade of B or above), including all competency exams, and 3) overall satisfactory academic performance and behavior in the School Psychology program. Students on academic probation may not be allowed to register for practicum and/or may have restrictions on the activities in which they can engage.

Students will complete a Practicum Contract within the first month of practicum documenting their proposed activities. The contract forms the basis for evaluating the student’s performance at the end of each semester, as well as helping the student and supervisor plan appropriate practicum activities. Both the contract and progress report are completed on line, but have to be signed by both the student and site supervisor; instructions may be found toward the end of this manual. **Students are also responsible for keeping a weekly practicum log of their time in different activities using the online program Time2Track.**

### **First Year (Spring Semester Only)**

The initial entry into a new practicum site includes time to learn about the culture of the school through observation. Depending upon the district, the amount of time students spend observing will vary. Practicum activities include observation of a range of school structures and processes, such as regular education classes, special education classes, resource rooms, meetings and consultation sessions between school psychologists and teachers, meetings between school psychologists and parents, child study team meetings, meetings of the intervention and referral services team, crisis intervention, and school-wide faculty meetings.

Opportunities for hands-on activities may include cognitive assessment and counseling. Students may engage in psychological assessment activities and report writing, once they have passed Cognitive Assessment. A maximum of four assessments may be conducted during this experience. Students may co-facilitate groups with either the school psychologist or other CST and school personnel, such as guidance counselors and conduct functional behavioral assessment (FBA's).

*Related Goals of First Semester of School-Based Practicum:*

- Learn about the culture of a district through some time spent observing school psychologists/supervisor and other CST personnel in meetings, conducting testing, writing IEPs, etc. Conduct (either in-part, or whole, depending upon appropriateness of case) 1-2 cognitive assessments
- Conduct (either in part, or whole) 1-2 social-emotional assessments involving behavioral/objective and projective assessments
- Conduct 1 FBA
- Observe at least 4 CST meetings such as: eligibility meetings, initial identification meetings, IEP revisions, etc.
- Observe 1-2 I&RS meeting/s
- Individual and/or group counseling, as appropriate

**Second Year (Fall & Spring)**

During the second year of the 9-credit sequence of school-based practicum, students continue their placements in their assigned school district for the entire academic year. They complete full psychological evaluations, participate in child study team meetings and intervention and referral services team meetings, engage in consultation with teachers and parents, and implement evidence-based interventions for individuals, including individual and group counseling, and evidence-based prevention or intervention programs for groups. Classroom based programming, crisis intervention, behavioral assessment and development of behavior improvement plans may also occur.

Second year students are required to complete one day of practicum a week though they may elect to take on an additional practicum of their choosing. This additional practicum **does not** fulfill requirements of the Advanced Practicum required during the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in the program

*Related Goals of Second Year of School-Based Practicum:*

- In depth exposure to and participation in CST process, as appropriate: for example, eligibility meetings, IEP writing (at least in part), giving feedback to parents, manifestation determination, out of district visits
- Carry 3-4 psychological testing cases which include cognitive testing and social-emotional-behavioral assessment (either in part or the entire case, as deemed appropriate by supervisor)
- If permitted by district LDTC, conduct 1 psychoeducational evaluation (learning/achievement evaluation) during Spring semester of second year

- Conduct an evidence-based intervention, such as individual/group counseling, classroom-based program (at least 2 cases)
- Exposure to crisis intervention
- Behavioral observation and/or FBA
- Provide teacher consultation
- Participate in I&RS and/or subsequent intervention activities

*Responsibilities of Supervisor for School-Based Practicum (all 3 semesters):*

- Weekly supervision at dedicated time (1 hour)
- Co-develop and approve Practicum Contract
- Contact School Psychology Practicum Coordinator regarding any concerns about student's performance
- Review, with student, their log of practicum hours and activities
- At the end of each semester, complete on-line evaluation of student using GSAPP School Psychology Practicum Competency ratings (see pp. 4-6 of this Handbook):
- First semester (January-June): In May, prior to end of semester, complete on-line End of Year evaluation and review with student
- Second semester (September-December): In December, prior to end of semester, complete on-line Mid-Year evaluation and review with student
- Third semester (January-June): In May, prior to end of semester, complete on-line End of Year evaluation and review with student

*Responsibilities of Student in School-Based Practicum (all 3 semesters):*

- Completion of 120 hours of practicum per semester
- Completion of a Group Supervision course at GSAPP per semester. ALL students in practicum are required to be register for Supervision in School Psychology (Year 1; 1 credit) and Advanced Group Supervision (Year 2; 3 credits each semester).
- Documentation of all practicum hours and activities using Time2Track ([www.time2track.com](http://www.time2track.com)). Log should be uploaded to GSAPPweb database at the end of every semester.
- Schedule in advance with supervisor, including any changes. Attendance is based on **SCHOOL DISTRICT** calendar, not Rutgers calendar. Practicum continues into June with students maintaining an ethical obligation to provide continuity of care to clients. Appropriate termination of services should be developed with practicum supervisor.
- Professional demeanor including appropriate attire, responsiveness to supervision, promptness, and use of technology (cell phones, laptops) is expected at all times
- At end of every semester, complete the on-line School Psychology Student Practicum Evaluation Form in GSAPPweb.

## **B. Advanced practicum (12 credits; 3<sup>rd</sup> year and beyond)**

### **Third Year (Fall & Spring)**

During the third year of practicum, students are required to complete two days of practicum each semester (6 credits each semester). Students may spend two days a week in one setting or select two different settings. Third year students are not required to undertake practicum in the public schools, though they may choose to do so. Students may continue to work in the partner school districts or may choose a specialized practicum from one of the additional practicum settings.

Along with each practicum course and the individual supervision by doctoral level psychologists that is provided at the practicum site, students participate in Advanced Supervision in School Psychology for each semester of third-year practicum (similar to the requirements of second-year practicum). This supervision course provides weekly group supervision for students by School Psychology Program faculty members and aims to provide input regarding student practicum work, to strengthen professional identity as a school psychologist, and to understand and enhance the use of self as a mediating variable in the delivery of services. Students are required to develop a written analysis of their professional growth at various points in the semester.

### **Related Goals of Third Year Practicum:**

- Refine professional practice skills, with an emphasis on systems and preventive interventions, and/or to
- Develop advanced specialty skills.
- Develop and implement intervention or prevention programs for small groups, classrooms or schools, and engage in the full range of services provided by practicing school psychologists.
- Develop advanced skills in working with populations such as children with autism, families of children with developmental disabilities, or children in foster care.
- Develop advanced skills in providing a specific type of psychotherapeutic intervention such as cognitive-behavior therapy or play therapy, or
- Develop advanced skills in systems-level prevention in schools.

### **Responsibilities of Supervisor for Advanced Practica:**

- Weekly supervision at dedicated time (1 hour)
- Co-develop and approve Practicum Contract
- Contact School Psychology Practicum Coordinator regarding any concerns about student's performance
- Review, with student, their log of practicum hours and activities
- At the end of each semester, complete on-line evaluation of student using GSAPP School Psychology Practicum Competency ratings (see pp. 4-6 of this Handbook).

*Responsibilities of Student in Advanced Practica:*

- Completion of 120 hours of practicum per semester
- Completion of a Group Supervision course at GSAPP per semester. ALL students in practicum are required to be registered for Advanced Group Supervision (Year 2; 3 credits each semester).
- Documentation of all practicum hours and activities using Time2Track ([www.time2track.com](http://www.time2track.com)). Logs should be uploaded to GSAPPweb database at the end of every semester.
- Schedule in advance with supervisor, including any changes. Attendance is based on the calendar of the agency or school district rather than Rutgers calendar. Practicum continues into June with students maintaining an ethical obligation to provide continuity of care to clients. Appropriate termination of services should be developed with practicum supervisor.
- Professional demeanor including appropriate attire, responsiveness to supervision, promptness, and use of technology (cell phones, laptops) is expected at all times
- At end of practicum, complete the on-line School Psychology Student Practicum Evaluation Form in GSAPPweb.

**C. Clinic practicum experiences (all semesters in first three years of program)**

In the interest of providing a comprehensive and rich training experience for school psychology students, the GSAPP School Psychology Program requires students to participate in a minimum of 3 credits of practica experiences through the GSAPP Psychological Services Clinic. These experiences provide students the opportunity to master a range of professional psychology skills in a clinic-type setting. These credits are earned by work at the Clinic over the course of six semesters (.5 credits each semester). Students will be exposed to a rich curriculum that involves intake assessments, psychoeducational assessments, and therapeutic services. Student experiences in the Clinic are developmentally sequenced (i.e., experiences are matched to students' developmental progression through coursework and the program) and are typically aligned with didactic courses (see Student Handbook for more details about the types of experiences, responsibilities of the student, and responsibilities of the Clinic regarding supervision).