

**American University
School of International Service
International Development Program
Master of Science in Development Management**

THE PRACTICUM 2006/2007
(33.693.01)

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The objective of the practicum is to put yourself in the position of a manager (in some cases a junior one) who will accomplish some practical and observable purpose in which your organization or community is positively interested; to the extent that this is feasible, and it usually is, your organization should agree and hold you (notionally if not formally) accountable for the results achieved.

This does not mean that you need to achieve your objectives in all respects, but rather that they (the organization or community) as well as you observe the progress, including the necessary adaptations that you do eventually make.

In the process you will self-consciously take the viewpoint of a manager, attempting to apply some selected principles of management (for example from the DM and PA courses) and carefully observe the process.

There are six required components to the practicum: One consists of the 8 preparation exercises; the second is carrying out the assignment which leads to the third which is an outcome/product i.e. the change, the result, the document; the fourth is reporting on, and analysis of, the process in a process report; the fifth is the formal presentation of your findings and experiences to the Development Management group; and the sixth is on-going participation with your colleagues in DM practicum meetings.

STAGE 1: PREPARATION

Prepared in advance of the work assignment itself; often with incomplete information. This **MUST** be submitted to, and accepted by, the Academic Supervisor either before, or early on in, the Practicum. Failure to do so may invalidate the Practicum:

I) a *Purpose Statement* that declares what the objective of your undertaking will be. These need not be grandiose or elaborate but something achievable by a person in your position in a period of three or six months or a year. (One paragraph).

ii) a *Personal Situation Analysis*: it is essential that a manager analyses carefully his/her situation in relation to others in the organization in terms of power, influence, skills, age, experience, sense of being an insider/outsider, gender, culture or ethnicity. (1/2 to one page)

iii) a *Stakeholder Analysis* explaining who the most affected parties/actors will be, how they are likely to be impacted, what level of influence they have, and how you propose to deal with them, that is, your strategy. (A one page table)

iv) a *Logframe* explaining goals, objectives, outputs and inputs, verifiable indicators, sources of information and critical assumptions. This may be difficult to complete in all aspects but you should push the exercise as far as is reasonable (A one page table)

v) a *Strategic Constraints and Opportunities Assessment*: in order to plan strategically it is important to think through what the key constraints limiting you and key opportunities helpful to you are likely to be. This may take the form of a SWOT analysis. (Half page)

vi) an *Action Plan* which requires you to break up your overall undertaking into discrete tasks involving specific people or groups of people (e.g. meeting with all relevant parties, questionnaire ready, interviews, trainees selected), clarify the relationship of those tasks, (some can be carried out simultaneously, some depend on the completion of prior tasks), to provide a provisional date for achievement of that task. (One Page Diagram of your choice – e.g. a simple critical path diagram, or Gantt Chart-- and a two-thirds to one page narrative explanation)

vii) five *Management Themes*, referring to twelve authors, who you believe will be relevant to your work and the relevance or utility of which you will observe as you carry out your task. (Approx four-five pages)

viii) a common sense discussion of *Qualitative and Quantitative Performance Measurement*: how you will know whether or what to extent you have achieved your objective(s); that is how will you measure your performance. (about half a page)

ix) You are strongly encouraged to provide any further diagrams representing your logic or the way in which you perceive of the structure or dynamic of your organization.

STAGE 2: CARRYING OUT THE ASSIGNMENT

The most important and core component of the practicum is carrying out the assignment that you and your organization have undertaken. This will involve both continual strategic thinking (keeping in mind your organizational context, your plan, your objective, and the main steps to achieve that objective) and the nitty-gritty of management (research, analysis, continual adaptation, writing, re-designing, information gathering, communication, persuasion, reminders, patience, persistence, coordination, compromises or trade offs etc.)

As you work through this process it will be necessary to keep a journal (possibly a weekly journal or one based around events, themes or insights), in order to fulfill the third component of the practicum.

If the product of your work is a document, e.g. a project proposal or a training design, then you will need to hand this in. If the product is more in the nature of an organizational change or increased capacity or a better information system you will need to explain this in your process report.

STAGE 3: REPORTING AND ANALYZING THE PROCESS

This process report is the principal academic component (albeit very applied in nature) of the practicum. (Whole report on the process between 20 and 30 pages). You have leeway to organize it as you wish, but you should include the following elements:

- i) *The Work Experience*: Commence by explaining the context and purpose of your practicum. Then describe the experience including major events and adaptations. Describe the major achievement(s) of the exercise. You may include personal experiences, insights and adaptations.
- ii) *Analysis*: Referring systematically to each of the eight preparatory exercises, and using them as the main mode of organizing this section, report analytically and insightfully on the process of carrying out your assignment, in the main analyzing to what extent you were able to achieve your goals, plans, deadlines and why and why not, and to what extent and in what ways your preparatory exercises were relevant or helpful, and why or why they were not, and how you adapted. (You must refer to at least four of the management themes and discuss what your experience has to say about them.)
- iii) *Lessons Learned*: Provide a section on key lessons or insights, and recommendations for the organization or community. Conclude with lessons that you feel are generalizable to the field of development management.
- iv) Provide a contents page and one page executive summary.
- v) Provide an annex containing a few helpful diagrams representing the organizational structure, or/and communications system or/and coordination practices or/and

relationship to the operating environment – consult the DM reader for ideas.

STAGE FOUR: PRESENTATION

On completion of the assignment and having prepared the process report, the student will make a formal analytical presentation on findings, experiences and management lessons to the Development Management group. This will usually take place at the final meeting of the semester, and after consultation with the practicum supervisor on form and substance of the presentation. The presentation will strive to be of the highest quality: succinct, to the point, informative, interesting, analytical and make appropriate use of visual techniques. The student will also be questioned by faculty and students.

ONGOING: PARTICIPATION

Students are *required* to participate in as many DM practicum meetings as possible, even before they register for the course and (if they have not completed the degree) after they have presented their practicum. These are to be seen as the equivalent of class meetings, albeit spread over four semesters. We do not foresee more than three a semester. These will take the form of introductory meetings (introducing students to each other and to the operating principles of the practicum), progress report meetings (findings, lessons learned, experience sharing), guest speakers on development management, and final presentation meetings (at which a student, on completion of the work and writing requirements, presents his/her findings and analysis.).

Please note: while you may work on your practicum over the summer, you may not be able to count on faculty advice, and you will not be able to do the formal presentation over the summer.

I look forward to working with you.