



**FIELD SUPERVISOR/RESEARCH MENTOR
HANDBOOK**

2023-2024

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Dear Prospective Field Supervisors/Research Mentors,

We would like to start by thanking you for taking the time to be a field supervisor or research mentor for a Master of Science in Gerontology student this semester at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Our MS in Gerontology program values and fosters student's ability to apply knowledge and skills to real world experiences working with older adults. The quality of a student's experience is directly tied to the quality and expertise of the supervision provided. We hope this handbook will serve as a guide for you as a field experience supervisor and allow you to develop a mutually beneficial working relationship with our students.

For students, the capstone course is their final class. It is cumulative and integrative, allowing students the opportunity to showcase all they have learned throughout the course of this program. Your position as field supervisor, provides students with guidance from an expert working in the field of aging and/or around aging issues.

We greatly appreciate your time and energy in working with our MS Gerontology students. We recognize the supervision of a gerontology student adds to your work responsibilities, and we want to emphasize that the field experience instructor and gerontology faculty are here to support you. We are happy to answer any questions or address any issues or concerns you may have regarding the field experience.

We look forward to having our students work with you and welcome any suggestions or feedback you may have regarding the field experience portion of the capstone course. Thank you!

Elise Eifert

Elise Eifert, Graduate Program Coordinator

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A. PURPOSE

The culminating experience for students in the MS in Gerontology Program is GRO 679-*Integrated Capstone in Gerontology*. As part of this course, students are required to participate in 80 hours of supervised field experience. The field experience provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, abilities, and skills related to professional competence in Gerontology. It is an applied learning experience which occurs in settings that serve older adults.

B. EDUCATION OBJECTIVES OF FIELD EXPERIENCE

Field experiences are unique to each student, therefore, vary greatly. Any experience that incorporates what the student has learned through the Gerontology Program and allows them to apply or practice that knowledge will be considered. The student should gain experience and be able to apply knowledge, abilities, and skills in the following areas of gerontological competence:

1. Gerontological Framework- Utilize Gerontological frameworks to examine human development and aging.
2. Theory- Relate biological, psychological, and social theory and science to understanding aging.
3. Research- Distinguish factors related to aging outcomes, both intrinsic and contextual, through critical thinking and empirical research.
4. Conceptualization- Develop comprehensive and meaningful concepts, definitions and measures for well-being of older adults and their families, grounded in Humanities and Arts.
5. Gerontological Perspective- Develop a gerontological perspective through knowledge and self-reflection.
6. Ethics- Adhere to ethical principles to guide work with and on behalf of older persons.
7. Communication- Engage, through effective communication, older persons, their families and the community, in personal and public issues in aging.
8. Collaboration- Engage collaboratively with others to promote integrated approaches to aging.

C. FIELD EXPERIENCE OPTIONS

Field experiences are related to specific program outcomes and are designed to integrate knowledge, abilities, and skills related to the Gerontology profession in actual practice under the direction of a qualified supervisor. Students have several options for their field experience:

1. *Research/Evaluation* Research involves conducting activities related to a scientific study. The student's work is guided by a willing *faculty member (research mentor)* identified by the student in conjunction with the GRO 679 Course Director.

Prerequisites include research methods and statistical coursework. Additionally, students should seek CITI training and IRB approval from the university *BEFORE* the start of GRO 679.

Recommended for students interested in research careers or who wish to continue in doctoral studies or other research-based programs.

2. *Internship*

An internship involves experience in a professional setting that serves older adults. The professionals in the field provide their understanding of the setting and their professional practices to assist the student in gaining practical experience. The student's work is guided and evaluated by a *supervisory professional in the field (field supervisor)* and in conjunction with the GRO 679 Course Director.

Prerequisites include that the student identify an internship site and supervisor *BEFORE* the start of GRO 679.

Recommended for students who lack experience in aging services and/or wish to gain new experience working with older adults.

3. *Service Learning*

Service learning involves developing, implementing, and/or evaluating a focused initiative in a professional field setting that serves older adults. A suitable project must engage with and solve an issue in partnership with the student's employer. The student's work is developed, guided and evaluated by a *supervisory professional in the field (field supervisor)* and in conjunction with the GRO 679 Course Director.

Prerequisites include that the student currently works in the aging services and can identify a supervisor at their place of employment *BEFORE* the start of GRO 679.

Recommended for students who 1) already work in the aging services industry or 2) are interested in expanding their current employer's programs or services to the aging population.

D. FIELD EXPERIENCE ACTIVITIES

Research/Evaluation

Research involves investigating a phenomenon arising from the student's interests. Students can initiate their own primary research study or partner with an established study to examine a unique aspect of that research or conduct secondary research that assists faculty with primary research.

Examples of acceptable research activities include:

1. *Systematic Literature Review*
2. *Data Collection*
3. *Survey Design*
4. *Focus Group Protocol/Guide*

Internship

An internship is an intensive form of applied learning where students acquire professional skills and gain career experience in supervised settings.

Examples of acceptable sites for an internship include any health, human, or social service agency that serves older adults and their families such as:

1. *Area Agency on Aging*
2. *Senior Center*
3. *PACE of the Triad*
4. *Alzheimer's Association*

Service Learning

Unlike an internship, service learning entails a student connecting with their employer and providing service, democratic engagement, and/or community research. Students must engage with and solve issues *in partnership* with their employer.

Examples of service learning activities include:

1. *Develop a care and service plan for aging individuals with intellectual or developmental delays for UMAR*
2. *Create a proposal for Senior House Sharing for UNCG Housing and Residence Life*
3. *Research and write a grant to support family caregiver respite program at St. Pius Catholic Church*
4. *Develop and implement staff training plan on Resident Dignity and Autonomy at Morningview at Irving Park*

The supervised and mentored activities that students work on in their field experience can result in tangible products. Below is a list of acceptable types of deliverables:

Assessment Tools	Formative Research Findings Reports	Literature Review
Curricula	Grant Proposals	Manuscripts
Dissemination Plans	Promotional or Educational Materials	Policies and Procedures Manuals
Evaluation Tools	Intervention Materials	Policy Briefs
Focus Group Guides	Interview Guides	White Paper
Presentation Materials	Program Proposals	Sustainability Plans

Additional Requirements

Research ONLY- For students to participate in research involving human subjects, they must become [Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative \(CITI Program\)](#) trained and complete an [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#) for their study. These can take months to complete and get approved so students are encouraged to plan accordingly for their field experience.

E. FIELD EXPERIENCE PROPOSAL

The primary role of the field supervisor is to support the student's field experience which is outlined in their field experience proposal. Students must connect with you, their planned field supervisor, to craft and create this proposal. This is to ensure that the field experience is both beneficial to the student as well as you. The proposal includes descriptions of the type of field experience, student's field experience purpose, student's field experience responsibilities, how the field experience relates to gerontological competencies, how the field experience aligns with student's long term goals, and more. It will also include a proposed timeline of planned responsibilities or activities over the 6-week period in which the field experience occurs.

Students must submit this proposal during the spring semester which is the semester prior to when the field experience occurs. The field experience proposal must be approved by the course director for GRO679, Dr. Chantelle Caro, before the student can begin their field experience.

F. FIELD SUPERVISOR/AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

You are a vital partner in the success of the field experience. Your role is to serve as a mentor to students by using your expertise and experience to guide them in the development of academically sound and realistically appropriate knowledge, abilities, and skills related to the profession of Gerontology. Keeping in mind that each student will have a unique field experience, generally speaking, you should:

1. Provide opportunities for student learning at the masters level, gerontological practice with individuals, families, groups, communities, and/or organizations.

2. Be in agreement to provide students with learning opportunities that relate to the core competencies of the Gerontology program.
3. Actively seek to establish a positive, courteous and effective working relationship with the student.
4. Ensure that the student is appropriately oriented to the organization and is afforded reasonable and adequate opportunity to enter the “culture” of the organization as a learner.
5. Meets with the student at least 2 times over the course of the capstone to provide the student with a mid- and final evaluation.
6. Notifies the course director of potential problems or conflicts in a timely manner to allow for problem solving at the earliest possible moment.

Time of Field Experience

You are responsible for supervising the student’s field experience over the course of 6 weeks in May and June. In collaboration with the student, you are expected to provide opportunities for the student to engage in 80-100 hours as outlined in the field experience proposal.

Field Experience Supervisor Qualifications

Internship and service learning students require the supervision of a field supervisor with an undergraduate degree and at least five years of post-graduate work experience with older adults OR a master degree and at least two years of postgraduate work experience with older adults.

Research students require the supervision of a research mentor with an undergraduate degree and at least five years of post-graduate research experience OR a graduate degree and at least two years of postgraduate research experience. A research mentor preferably has a doctorate and is an active researcher.

Most importantly, the field supervisor should have a commitment:

1. to the Gerontology profession with its knowledge, skills, and abilities and/or
2. to evidence-based practice with older adults.

G. CONTACT INFORMATION AT UNCG

If there are any questions or concerns, the field supervisor/research mentor may contact the following Gerontology program faculty:

	Dr. Chantelle Caro	Dr. Elise Eifert
Phone	336-256-8564	336-256-1099
Email	cscaro@uncg.edu	ekeifert@uncg.edu