Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Practicum

Does the University of Memphis dictate the requirements and standards regarding my practicum in order to qualify to take the certification exam?

The University of Memphis may have some specific instructions and regulations regarding how your practicum is conducted, but the primary standards and regulations were established by the Behavior Analysis Certification Board® (BACB.com). The student should be observant of all requirements and standards set forth by the board.

Which category of experience/supervision does The University of Memphis provide for students in the Applied Behavior Analysis program?

According to the BCBA, there are three categories of experience: Supervised Independent Fieldwork, Practicum (Individual and Group Supervision; Direct and Indirect hours), and Intensive Practicum. Students may accrue experience in only one category at a time. The U of M students must meet the practicum requirements set forth by the BACB®. Under the practicum requirements students are required to obtain a total of 1,000 hours. These consist of 500 Direct contact hours and 500 Indirect hours. The 500 Indirect hours include Group and Individual Supervision with a BCBA.

Can the student conduct his/her practicum at their place of employment?

Yes and No. Even though the BACB® does allow an individual to conduct their training at their workplace (with provisions in place, such as a BCBA on site or through obtaining prior permission), it has been decided by the department to ensure that all practicum hours are being followed through with accordingly by the student and by the standards set forth by the BACB® that students need to select a different setting to participate with their practicum.

Does my supervisor have to be a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)?

Yes. Not only does the supervisor have to be board certified, he/she is not allowed to be the student's relative, subordinate, and/or employee.

Does the student need weekly supervision from the BCBA?

Yes. However, your BCBA supervisor may decide that more frequent supervision is required.

Does the BCBA have to be directly observing the student ‘in person’ in order for the practicum hours to count?

Yes and no. The BCBA may decide that he/she will only provide supervision (in person) to students when they are always present. Meaning, each hour of the students required
hours to be conducted in a given week (or semester) will be in the presence of a BCBA. However, some BCBA supervisors may decide to allow some students to work independently and only provide a limited number of direct supervision hours per week. The department only requires the student to obtain 1 hour of direct supervision from their BCBA supervisor on a weekly basis while the student will have a professor (who is a BCBA) also providing supervision in a classroom setting.

Does the BCBA supervisor dictate my grade for practicum?

Yes, to an extent. The BCBA supervisor and professor will have a 50/50 say in the student’s grade. The student’s grade from the BCBA may be based on work performance, ethics, attendance, and so forth. The classroom grade may be dependent on participation and attendance (but not limited to).

What happens if I do not get a passing grade and/or do not get all of the required hours conducted for my practicum in a particular semester?

In order to take the BACB® examination, an individual has to complete 1000 hours of supervised independent fieldwork (500 Direct hours and 500 Indirect hours) in behavior analytic practices. The department will not sign the necessary forms for the student to submit to the BACB® to take the examination if the student did not complete the total number of hours per semester required and/or did not perform to expectation (based on grade).

How many hours for of supervised independent fieldwork may I do in one semester?

According to the BACB®, the distribution of Practicum hours (Direct hours) must be at least 10 hours per week, but not more than 25 hours per week, for a minimum of 3 weeks per month. However, the department has dictated that for every 3 hour course credits that are taken, the student must complete 10 hours of supervised independent fieldwork to count towards the practicum. The student is limited to 6 practicum credit hours per semester. The student should have at least 75 total hours of supervision from a BCBA before qualifying to take the certification examination.

Can the student switch BCBA supervisors’ mid-term or have multiple supervisors in one semester?

No. Once a student selects a BCBA supervisor to work with, he/she must work under their supervision during the whole semester. However, the student may select a different supervisor the following semester. The department may have special provisions for particular situations though.

Can the BCBA supervisor terminate a student’s practicum with him/her during the semester?
Yes. A student may be fired if he/she behaves unethical, breaks any part of his/her contract with the university and/or BCBA supervisor, and/or does not attend scheduled appointments. The BCBA will discuss the details of the students’ termination with his/her practicum professor. Once a student is terminated, he/she can not participate with another practicum during that semester and the hours worked during that particular semester will not count toward the students supervised independent fieldwork requirements. The student may resume his/her practicum the following semester with permission from the practicum supervisor and/or department.

**What if a student has concerns regarding their practicum and/or BCBA supervisor?**

It is the responsibility of the student to address any concerns regarding their supervision with their professor(s) and/or BCBA supervisors in a timely manner. They will work together to bring resolution to appropriately deal with any concerns the student may have.

**Can the student retroactively count hours from previous work before beginning the program at U of M?**

No. It is the responsibility of the student to complete all hours required during a particular semester. If a student is unable to complete all hours in one particular week, then he/she needs to discuss making up hours missed with the BCBA supervisor. However, all required hours must be conducted by the end of the semester.

**May the student use the same supervisor for their entire practicum?**

No. The department has decided that the student should have at least 2 different BCBA supervisors over the duration of their total practicum for purposes of learning different ways in which behavior analytic practices are conducted and so that the student can generalize his/her skills across different populations. We feel the student should have one semester that is focused on an adult population and one semester that concentrates on a child/adolescent population. After this requirement, the students may then choose any given BCBA supervisor and/or population to work.

**May supervisors meet with students in groups for supervision?**

Supervision may be conducted in small groups of 10 or fewer participants for no more than half of the total supervised hours in each supervisory period. The remainder of the total supervision hours in each supervisory period must consist of direct one-to-one contact.

**How often should the supervisor observe the student in the natural environment?**
The supervisor must observe the student at least once every two weeks. This observation may be conducted via web-cameras, videotape, videoconferencing, or similar means in lieu of the supervisor being physically present. This observation does not count as individual supervision.

**Should supervision be documented each supervisory meeting?**

Yes, the university practicum professor will provide a feedback form, which is provided by the BACB. Supervisors are responsible for providing documentation for each supervisory period. The university supervisor is responsible for retaining copies of the forms. As stated by BACB, the right is reserved to request this documentation at any time following an individual’s application to take the certification exam.