School of Media,
Creative Arts and Social Inquiry (MCASI)

LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES, RECORDS AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (LARIS)

PRACTICUM MANUAL
FOR
STUDENTS

CURTIN UNIVERSITY
AND
OPEN UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA (OUA)
2021

COVID-19 IS IMPACTING THE SECURING OF PLACEMENTS IN A NUMBER OF LOCATIONS. IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS PLEASE REACH OUT TO THE PRACTICUM PROGRAM COORDINATOR TO DISCUSS.
mcasiprac@curtin.edu.au or
+61 8 9266 2613
PLEASE NOTE THE UNIVERSITY CURRENTLY REQUIRES THE COMPLETION OF A COVID-19 DECLARATION FOR ALL STUDENTS ATTENDING APPROVED PLACEMENTS.

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1.   INTRODUCTION

Libraries, Archives, Records and Information Science (LARIS) at Curtin University organises practicum placements for all students enrolled in first-qualifying courses in the area of librarianship, archives and corporate information/records management.

Practicums are field placements in environments which offer students the opportunity to obtain work experience and demonstrate professional competencies in a structured environment. It is expected that students will interpret and apply theory, and practise skills acquired during the course. Students may be placed in library and information services or records management and archives centres; however, in some circumstances placements may be arranged in other appropriate information organisations.

The practicum process is a collaborative effort between the student, the Practicum Program Coordinator and the Practicum Mentor. First-year placements are designed to introduce students to a professional environment, with students expected to fulfil duties typical of a junior library assistant/records clerk in the host organisation, along with a small project. Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters practicums are designed to allow students to experience the work of professionals. In all placements, practicum mentors are requested to extend students' knowledge further by expecting them to participate in a project or projects.

Students should carefully consider their options when selecting a placement. Although guided by the Practicum Program Coordinator in selecting placements, they should consider their career prospects or special interests. Each placement is planned individually and all arrangements are made by the Practicum Program Coordinator, who will call for practicum applications by early to mid-semester or study period of the semester or study period **BEFORE** the practicum is conducted. Please note that semesters relate to Curtin students and study periods to Open Universities Australia (OUA) students.

Please see BlackBoard and the link at 'My Organisations' titled Libraries, Archives, Records and Information Science (LARIS) Practicum Documents. All relevant documentation can be found at this site. This will be referred to as the LARIS Blackboard site in this document.

THIS MANUAL IS A GENERIC ONE WHICH IS USED FOR ALL PRACTICUM UNITS LISTED. SOME SECTIONS OF THE MANUAL ARE APPLICABLE ONLY TO CERTAIN UNITS.

2.   LIST OF PRACTICUM UNITS

The units which have practicums attached are listed below:

Bachelor of Arts (Librarianship and Corporate Information Management) PLEASE NOTE THE UNDERGRADUATE QUALIFICATION IS BEING PHASED OUT BY NOVEMBER 2022

Unit	Timing	Hours
OUA INFO1013 LIM150 Information Services Foundation Practicum ONLY AVAILABLE SP1, 2021	First year practicum for all undergraduate students.	Unit includes professional work experience of 2 weeks full time plus coursework. Approximately 75 hours.
INFO3008 Information Services Professional Practicum/OUA INFO3009 LIM350 Information Services Professional Practicum	Third year practicum for all undergraduate students.	Unit includes professional work experience of 3 weeks full time plus coursework. Approximately 112.5 hours.

Graduate Diploma in Information and Library Studies
Graduate Diploma in Records Management and Archives
Master of Information Management (MIM)

Unit	Timing	Hours
INFO5022 Management of Information Services/OUA INFO5023 INFM510 Management of Information Services	Practicum placement for all Graduate Diploma students and first practicum placement for MIM students.	Unit includes professional work experience of 3 weeks full time plus coursework. Approximately 112.5 hours.
INFO5009 Information Theory & Research/OUA INFO5030 INFM130 Information Theory & Research	Second practicum placement for all MIM students.	Unit includes professional work experience of 3 weeks full time plus coursework. Approximately 112.5 hours.

3.   COURSE REQUIREMENT

Libraries, Archives, Records and Information Science (LARIS) is highly committed to professional work place integrated learning (WIL) experience for students and satisfactory completion of the nominated practicum/s is an **ESSENTIAL** requirement for successful completion of the course of study in which a student is enrolled. Assessment requirements for practicums are outlined in this manual, on the LARIS Blackboard site and in the relevant unit outlines.

Undergraduate students are required to undertake a practicum in a library and information service (LIS) environment AND in a records management and archives environment since this course is designed to produce graduates qualified in all areas. Some students will undertake the LIS practicum in first year and the RMA practicum in third year, whilst other students will undertake the RMA practicum in first year and the LIS practicum in third year. The order of the practicums depends on the student's career aspirations, current or previous work experience in the information professions and units of study completed.

Postgraduate students: Graduate Diploma students are required to undertake a practicum in a library and information service (LIS) environment OR in a records management and archives (RMA) environment, depending on their area of specialisation.

Master of Information Management (MIM) students will undertake a practicum in an LIS environment AND in a RMA environment. This means that on completion of the MIM course all students gain a professionally recognised qualification in librarianship, records management and archives.

4.   TIMING OF THE PLACEMENT

For Curtin enrolled, first year undergrads (still requiring a placement), studying full time, the practicum placement will generally take place after the semester, either in the June/July mid-year break or over summer, from mid-January through to late February. This means that you study the practicum unit and then go on placement. If studying part time, it may be possible to go on placement during the semester, once the practicum unit coursework is completed. Again, please note the undergraduate qualification is being phased out by November 2022. The first year placement unit is now only available via OUA, SP1, 2021.

For Curtin enrolled, third year undergrads and post graduate students studying full time, the practicum placement normally takes place before semester commences. For first semester enrolments the time period is over the summer semester break from mid-January through to late-February. For second semester enrolments, the practicum usually takes place during the June/July mid-year break. This means that you go on placement prior to completing the practicum unit. The idea behind this timing is that you complete the placement and remaining units, then graduate. If studying part time, it may be possible to go on placement during the semester.

For OUA enrolled, first year undergrads (still requiring a placement), studying full time, the practicum placement will generally take place after the study period. This means that you study the practicum unit and then go on placement in the subsequent study period, generally June/July or over summer, from mid-January to late February. If studying part time, it may be possible to go on placement during the study period, once the practicum unit coursework is completed. Again, please note the undergraduate qualification is being phased out by November 2022. The first year placement unit is now only available via OUA, SP1, 2021.

For OUA enrolled, third year undergrads and post graduate OUA enrolled students studying full time the practicum placement normally takes place before the study period commences. For SP1 enrolments the time period is during SP4, from mid-January through to late-February. For SP3 enrolments, the practicum usually takes place in SP2, generally June/July. This means that you go on placement prior to completing the practicum unit. If studying part time, it may be possible to go on placement during the study period. There will be a number of graduate diploma and MIM students studying in SP1, 2 and 3 in which case the timing will need to be carefully considered to fit with the study load and the anticipated course completion.

Students need to make arrangements for leave from work and/or childcare in order to undertake the practicum within these time periods. However, there is some flexibility for exceptional cases where it is not possible to undertake a practicum during the preferred times. Please contact the Practicum Coordinator as soon as possible if you think there may be a problem with the timing of the practicum. This information must be included on the Practicum Application Form as well.

5.   PURPOSE OF PRACTICUMS

Practicums are designed to:
- develop students' competence and awareness of policies and practices in the information industry
- allow students to interpret and apply theory and practise skills acquired during the course
- cater for differing levels of competencies depending on which unit students are enrolled in

Practicums at different levels have different purposes and are designed to provide different experiences and develop different competencies, as indicated below.

5.1   First year undergraduate practicums

The first-year undergraduate practicum offers a basic introduction to the information profession which allows students to judge whether or not they have an aptitude for, and interest in, working within this field. First year students will occupy a clerical position but should begin to think strategically regarding professional issues. Although mainly involved in clerical work, students at this level should be given an introduction to professional duties and responsibilities.

First-year placements are designed to enhance skills, develop competence and knowledge of the profession, and to increase student self-confidence, as indicated below:

Professionalism
   test students aptitude for basic information related tasks,

give students the opportunity to reassure themselves that they do wish to work in an information profession,

provide students with an opportunity to see how some of the theory of information management learnt in the first semester of the course is put into practice,

introduce students to some practicing information professionals, who may be able to give independent guidance and advice on the choice of profession,

contribute to the students' ongoing socialisation into their chosen profession.

Competencies

improve proficiency in core competencies required of all those who plan to work in the information industry by:

understanding the contexts in which information sources are created, stored, organised, retrieved and disseminated,

developing an awareness of clients' information needs,

developing understanding of corporate, social and cultural values in the workplace,

recognising the need to plan, forecast, implement and evaluate management of information services,

honing generic information management skills,

working with others and in teams,

learning time management,

communicating ideas and information,

using a variety of technologies,

planning and organising activities,

problem-solving,

giving students the opportunity to become proficient in standard information work practices and processes,

providing students with the opportunity of improving technological skills.

5.2   Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters practicums

Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters practicums are designed to introduce students to the work environment of information professionals and are a bridge between study and the profession. Students at these levels are expected to work as junior professional members of staff, mainly undertaking professional tasks but also some clerical tasks as required. Clerical work, however, should not comprise the major component of these practicums.

Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters students should be exposed to management issues (as appropriate), meetings and discussions of issues facing the practicum venue at the time of the placement.

Professionalism

application of theoretical aspects of the course in a practical environment,

understanding the operational environment of an information service and the role played in that environment by several of its component parts,

developing and maintaining productive working relationships with professional supervisors,

contributing to an ongoing socialisation into the profession,

applying professional ethics and ethos in the workplace.

Competencies

improving proficiency in core competencies required of all those who plan to work in the information industry by:

understanding the contexts in which information sources are created, stored, organised, retrieved and disseminated

building awareness of clients' information needs

increasing an understanding of corporate, social and cultural values in the workplace

recognising the need to plan, forecast, implement and evaluate management of information services

identifying processes for acquiring, licensing and creating relevant information sources by organisation, storage, retrieval and preservation of information

delivering services customised for clients, promoting information access, providing guidance, education and training in the use of information services and information literacy skills

marketing of information services

honing generic information management skills

working with others and in teams

learning time management

communicating ideas and information

using a variety of technologies

planning and organising activities

demonstrating initiative

providing evidence of independent thought and reflective professional practice

problem-solving

giving students the opportunity to become proficient in standard information work practices and processes

providing students with the opportunity of applying advanced technological skills in the marketplace

6.   PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Placements may be in any library, records management and archives centre or information environment where the student can be given supervision by a qualified professional who is eligible for membership of the Australian Library and Information Association, the Records and Information Professionals Australasia or the Australian Society of Archivists. This staff member will be called the **Practicum Mentor**. Placements are not permitted in organisations with unqualified managers except in exceptional circumstances where the staff member has had extensive management experience within the field of study.

Before organising a placement, the Practicum Program Coordinator carefully considers the information service, its staff and resources, and the suitability of the organisation as an educational experience for the student. Students are encouraged to suggest possible practicum placements; however, consultation will take place between the student and Practicum Program Coordinator to ensure the most appropriate choice is made.

Students are required to work the normal hours of the institution in which they are undertaking their practicum and should be rostered to cover the range of opening hours of the service where they are placed. However, hours may be arranged to suit the student and the host supervisor. Duties will be arranged in consultation with the host service and the Practicum Program Coordinator. Host service holidays are taken as holidays by the student. The placement is a full-time commitment except in exceptional circumstances.

Students will **NOT** be given a placement in an organisation with which they have a current or prior working relationship. This means students *cannot* do a practicum in their current workplace, even if this occurs outside the hours of paid employment. Previous experience in these situations has shown that students and employers at times find it difficult to distinguish between the practicum and work. Also, it is considered important that students gain a breadth of experience, have an opportunity to work in different types of organisation and be exposed to different corporate cultures.

It is the responsibility of the student to alert the Practicum Program Coordinator to any potential breaches of this requirement.

6.1   Professional information and competencies

To develop a greater understanding of professional requirements for the information profession, please refer to the following publications and sites.

Library and information services:
http://www.alia.org.au/open-access-resources/policies-standards-and-guidelines

> *Foundation knowledge for entry-level library and information professionals.* (Adopted 1998. Amended 2009. Reviewed 2012. Amended 9 December 2014; updated and adopted December 2020, previously known as 'The Library and Information Sector: Core Knowledge, Skills and Attributes). Available at: http://www.alia.org.au/about-alia/policies-standards-and-guidelines/library-and-information-sector-core-knowledge-skills-and-attributes
> *Salary scales and work level guidelines.* Available at: https://membership.alia.org.au/resources/member-resources/salary-scales-and-work-level-guidelines (NB: ALIA membership required to access).

Recordkeeping and archives:
https://www.rimpa.com.au/
https://www.archivists.org.au/membership-information/professional-recognition

7. PROCEDURES FOR ORGANISING PLACEMENTS

This practicum manual provides students with procedures and a schedule for the organisation and completion of the practicum. It is the responsibility of students to ensure that they check the procedures and schedule and are able to meet the requirements for timely completion of the practicum.

Practicum procedures

1. The Practicum Program Coordinator advises all students of procedures for the practicums by broadcast email using Blackboard and the MCASILARIS list (ALL STUDENTS SHOULD BE ON THIS LIST-SEE UNIT OUTLINES), the Libraries, Archives, Records and Information Science (LARIS) e-list. The email includes a link to the LARIS BlackBoard site 'My Organisations' titled Libraries, Archives, Records and Information Science (LARIS) Practicum Documents where all relevant information and documentation is available.
2. The student downloads the *Practicum Manual for Students* from the LARIS Blackboard site and ensures this is read <u>very</u> carefully. Take particular note of the criteria and guidelines for equivalency or variation to the practicum.
3. The student completes all required documentation (available from the LARIS Blackboard site) and emails it to the Practicum Program Coordinator by:

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<u>FRIDAY 26 MARCH 2021</u>

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Documentation should be completed online and emailed to the Practicum Program Coordinator as an email attachment from the <u>student's Curtin email address</u>. The documentation includes:

- The *Practicum Application Form*, ensuring all relevant information is provided. Students must provide three preferences of information services they would like to attend.
- A tailored *Resume* as specified in the Practicum Application Form, incorporating a study plan. Or you are welcome to email this as a separate document.
- The *Contact Details* spread sheet, ensuring all information is provided - scroll left and right in the spread sheet - and the file is named according to the instructions below. This file <u>must</u> be emailed to the Practicum Program Coordinator and is used to sort all placements.

4. When sending emails to the Practicum Program Coordinator you must use the generic MCASIprac@curtin.edu.au address not the Curtin address of the Coordinator. **Students must email from their Curtin student email address.** The subject line of all emails <u>must</u> include:
- Your last name and first initial
- Prac unit number
- Your student number
- Brief purpose of the email
- e.g. Shillington R INFO1012 Information Services Foundation Practicum 1234567 Prac application

5. When attaching documents to an email please ensure all file names include your last name, first name, unit number, and brief title, e.g. Shillington R INFO3001 prac app.doc

6. The Practicum Program Coordinator generally contacts the information service that is the student's first preference and will seek alternatives if that or the second and third suggestions are not possible. Where two or more students request the same venue as their first preference the Practicum Program Coordinator will take into consideration the other preferences of each student and the suitability of students for particular venues.

7. Information regarding the placement is forwarded to the Practicum Mentor and student by email. **It is essential for students to monitor their Curtin email accounts in the period leading up to, during and after the practicum placement. All communication will be sent to the student email account.**

8. Once the placement is confirmed the Practicum Program Coordinator will email a confirmation to the student. Students are requested to contact the Practicum Mentor well before the practicum commencement date to introduce themselves and it is requested that students visit to finalise arrangements. This is referred to as the pre-prac meeting. Increasingly, host organisations/practicum mentors, are requesting an informal interview prior to agreeing to host. In this case, students will receive an email request asking that they make contact with the potential host, to organise an interview time. Contingent on the interview, the student may or may not receive an email to confirm the placement. A question often asked is how long will it take to organise a placement? As you can appreciate this varies tremendously from a few days to months. You are always welcome to check in on the status of arrangements by emailing the Practicum Program Coordinator.

9. Curtin fieldwork preparation and documentation is completed prior to going on placement, detailed instructions will be provided by the Practicum Program Coordinator in the confirmation email. Please see: https://students.curtin.edu.au/experience/employment/wil/fieldwork-preparation/

10. Where possible, Perth metropolitan students will be visited by a member of staff whilst on practicum; other students will be contacted by phone at the placement venue. Sometimes a virtual meeting will be set up.

11. 'Letters' of thanks are sent to Practicum Mentors by the Practicum Program Coordinator and by the student.

12. Students must complete the *Student Evaluation of Practicum* form available via the LARIS Blackboard site and return to the Practicum Program Coordinator within two weeks of completing the practicum.

13. Students will undertake assignments in accordance with the demands of the practicum unit in which they are enrolled. Details regarding practicum assignments, where set, are available in the relevant unit outlines.

14. **Students must notify the Practicum Program Coordinator if they withdraw from the practicum unit and no longer require a placement**.

8.   POSSIBLE PRACTICUM LOCATIONS

The Practicum Program Coordinator will make initial contact with potential placement venues. Students MUST NOT contact an information service directly unless requested by the Practicum Program Coordinator. Students must indicate three preferences for practicum locations when completing the *Practicum Application Form* and **thoughtful** reasons for selecting these locations. This reasoning assists the Practicum Program Coordinator and is supplied to potential host organisations. If possible, the preferences should indicate specific organisations, e.g. Rockhampton Regional Library or City of Stirling Records Management.

The following publications and websites are available to assist students in identifying possible placement locations.

Australian Capital Territory Library Service: https://www.library.act.gov.au/find-us
Australian Libraries Gateway: Find a Library: http://www.nla.gov.au/libraries/
Directory of Queensland Public Libraries: http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/visit-us/find-a-public-library

New South Wales Public Library Directory:
   http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/services/public_libraries/find_a_NSW_public_library/find_library_index.html
Northern Territory Libraries: see http://www.nla.gov.au/libraries/
South Australian Public Library Directory:
   https://www.libraries.sa.gov.au/client/en_AU/sapubliclibraries/
Tasmanian Public Library Directory: https://libraries.tas.gov.au/locations/
Victorian Public Library Locator:
   https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/454403/2020-Directory-of-Public-Library-Services-in-Victoria-1-July-2020.pdf
Western Australian Libraries: see http://www.nla.gov.au/libraries/

Libraries also can be found online. Do some research!
A growing number of *international directories of libraries* are available.

Publications listing corporate information services for records management and archives practicums are more challenging to find; however, government bodies at all levels are required under legislation to have corporate information services and most large organisations have such departments as well. The criterion for all site selection is that the service must be managed by a full-time, qualified information professional.

8.1   International and interstate placements

PLEASE NOTE THAT DUE TO COVID-19 INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL FROM AUSTRALIA IS CURRENTLY BANNED. INTERSTATE TRAVEL IN AUSTRALIA, DEPENDING ON WHERE YOU ARE LOCATED AND THE CURRENT RESTRICTIONS, MAY ALSO NOT BE POSSIBLE. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT THE PRACTICUM PROGRAM COORDINATOR. IF YOU ARE A STUDENT LOCATED OVERSEAS PLEASE CONTACT THE PRACTICUM PROGRAM COORDINATOR

INFORMATION IN THIS SECTION HAS BEEN REMOVED

9.   EQUIVALENCY AND VARIATION TO THE PRACTICUM

One of the main aims of the practicum is to enhance students' employment possibilities; therefore, students with previous work experience are encouraged to take this opportunity to explore different types of information services. While it is understood the completion of a practicum can cause stress and financial difficulties, a broadening of professional practice can lead to better employment prospects, so students should not be too eager to seek equivalency.

Equivalency and variation to the practicum may be granted but only in accordance with the criteria and guidelines outlined below. Students who think they may be eligible for an equivalency or variation to the practicum should read these criteria and guidelines very carefully and then present a written submission to the Practicum Program Coordinator as soon as possible. Please note, however, that all decisions are made by the Libraries, Archives, Records and Information Science (LARIS) Committee, which consists of the LARIS Discipline Lead, Practicum Program Coordinator, Course Coordinators as appropriate.

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The <u>deadline</u> for applications for equivalency and variation to the practicum is
<u>FRIDAY 26 MARCH 2021</u>

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If in doubt about your eligibility for an equivalency or variation, please email the Practicum Program Coordinator as soon as possible, describing your situation.

9.1   Criteria for equivalency – first-year practicum

IMPORTANT

At the undergraduate level, students are required to undertake a placement in a library and information service AND in a records management and archives environment since this course is designed to produce graduates qualified in all areas. Therefore, if an equivalency from the first-year practicum is granted on the basis of work experience in a library and information service, or previous qualifications, the third-year practicum MUST be undertaken in a records management and archives environment, and vice versa. There will be no exceptions to this requirement. You should consider this **VERY** carefully when deciding whether to apply for an equivalency from the first-year practicum.

To be eligible for an equivalency from the <u>first-year practicum</u>, students must have:
- recent work experience within a relevant library and information service, archives or records management service ('an information service') for a period of at least 6 months full-time or equivalent part-time,
- worked under the supervision of a qualified and/or experienced professional within the relevant field, for the duration of the relevant experience,
- undertaken duties typical of a junior library/records/archives assistant or clerical officer,
- a satisfactory reference from a current or previous professional supervisor supporting the application for equivalency and verifying the nature and relevance of duties undertaken, and
- Sufficient access to an information service to complete any coursework assignments.

However, students who have extensive, but not recent, work experience in an information service, and/or have worked without the supervision of a qualified professional, may be permitted to offer their experience in consideration of a variation to the practicum requirements.

<u>Note</u>: The LARIS Committee reserves the right to determine what constitutes relevant and recent work experience. For example, a student who meets the criteria but has experience in only one, small information service, may be required to undertake a practicum in a different environment in order to gain a broader experience.

Please read the Guidelines below (Section 9.4) when considering whether to apply for an equivalency or variation to the first-year practicum.

9.2   Criteria for equivalency – third-year practicum

IMPORTANT

Equivalency is rarely granted for third-year practicums since it is felt that students need to broaden their professional expertise in new environments. At the undergraduate level, students are required to undertake a placement in a library and information service AND in a records management and archives environment since this course is designed to produce graduates qualified in all areas.

Students MUST undertake a third-year placement in a different information environment to their first-year placement or the environment they were exempted from in first-year. Therefore, if a first-year practicum was completed in a library and information service, the third-year practicum MUST be undertaken in a records management and archives environment, and vice versa. Similarly, if an equivalency was granted for the first-year practicum, the third-year practicum must be in the alternate environment. This requirement for a practicum in both environments WILL NOT be waived regardless of a student's experience in one of the environments, their current working arrangements, or their future employment aims or prospects.

To be eligible for an equivalency from the <u>third-year practicum</u>, students must be able to demonstrate relevant and recent work experience in an information service within the alternate environment to their first-year placement or equivalency. For example, to be eligible for an equivalency from the third-year practicum, a student who completed a first-year practicum in a library environment, or gained an equivalency based on library experience, must be able to demonstrate relevant and recent experience in the records management and archives environment.

Furthermore, to be considered for an equivalency from the third-year practicum, students must have:

- recent work experience within a relevant information service for a period of at least 12 months full-time or equivalent part-time,
- worked under the supervision of a qualified and/or experienced professional within the relevant field, for the duration of the relevant experience,
- undertaken duties typical of a junior, qualified professional within the information service, and
- a satisfactory reference from a current or previous professional supervisor supporting the application for equivalency and verifying the nature and relevance of duties undertaken.

However, students who have extensive, but not recent, work experience in an information service; have worked without the supervision of a qualified professional; and/or have not undertaken the duties of a professional, may be permitted to offer their experience in consideration of a variation to the practicum requirements.

Note: The LARIS Committee reserves the right to determine what constitutes relevant and recent work experience. For example, a student who meets the criteria but has experience in only one, small information service, may be required to undertake a practicum in a different environment in order to gain a broader experience.

Please read the Guidelines below (Section 9.4) when considering whether to apply for an equivalency or variation to the third-year practicum.

9.3   Criteria for equivalency – Graduate Diploma and Master of Information Management (MIM) practicums

IMPORTANT

To be eligible for an equivalency or variation from the Graduate Diploma (pre-2015 enrolment or from 2015) or MIM (single qualification, pre-2015 enrolment) practicum, students must be able to demonstrate relevant and recent work experience in an information service within the student's particular study stream. For example, to be eligible for an equivalency or variation a student in the Records Management and Archives stream must be able to demonstrate relevant and recent work experience in the records management and/or archives environment.

Students undertaking the MIM (dual qualification, pre-2015 enrolment or from 2015), that is, with a major in BOTH Librarianship AND Records Management/Archives, must undertake a placement in a library and information service AND in a records management and archives environment since this course is designed to produce graduates qualified in all areas. Students who have already completed a Graduate Diploma in EITHER librarianship OR records management/archives will need to undertake a second placement in the alternate environment to their Graduate Diploma placement.

To be eligible for an equivalency from the second practicum, students must be able to demonstrate relevant and recent work experience in an information service within the alternate environment to their first placement or equivalency. For example, to be eligible for an equivalency from the second practicum, a student who completed a first practicum in a records management and archives environment, or gained an equivalency based on a records management and archives experience, must be able to demonstrate relevant and recent experience in the library and information service environment.

To be considered for an equivalency from a Graduate Diploma or MIM practicum, students must have:

- recent work experience within a relevant information service for a period of at least 12 months full-time or equivalent part-time,
- worked under the supervision of a qualified and/or experienced professional within the relevant field, for the duration of the relevant experience,

- undertaken duties typical of a junior, qualified professional within the information service, and
- a satisfactory reference from a current or previous professional supervisor supporting the application for equivalency and verifying the nature and relevance of duties undertaken.

However, students who have extensive, but not recent, work experience in an information service; have worked without the supervision of a qualified professional; and/or have not undertaken the duties of a professional, may be permitted to offer their experience in consideration of a variation to the practicum requirements.

Note: The LARIS Committee reserves the right to determine what constitutes relevant and recent work experience. For example, a student who meets the criteria but has experience in only one, small information service, may be required to undertake a practicum in a different environment in order to gain a broader experience.

Please read the Guidelines below (Section 9.4) when considering whether to apply for an equivalency or variation to the Graduate Diploma or MIM practicum.

9.4   Guidelines for applying for an equivalency or variation to the practicum

Students seeking equivalency from the practicum element of a unit are required to email all documentation to the Practicum Program Coordinator, via the student's Curtin email address, by

FRIDAY 26 MARCH 2021

The documentation includes:

1. The *Contact Details* spread sheet, ensuring all information is provided and the file is named according to the instructions in section 7.5 of this manual. The spread sheet is available from the LARIS Blackboard site.
2. A covering letter outlining the reasons for the request. Students must address each of the criteria at 9.1 **or** 9.2 **or** 9.3 and indicate how they satisfy these. Note: Even if you are unable to satisfy all criteria you may still be eligible for a partial equivalency from the practicum, in which case you will be required to complete the *Practicum Application Form*
3. A tailored *Resume* with attached study plan.
4. A written reference from a current or recent manager/supervisor supporting the application equivalency and verifying the nature and relevance of duties undertaken (see item 'e' below).

Please carefully consider the following guidelines before submitting an application for an equivalency.

a. There is NO EQUIVALENCY from the COURSEWORK COMPONENTS of the practicum units. A student who gains an equivalency from the practicum component MUST remain enrolled in the unit with which the practicum is associated as there are assignments and coursework to be completed.
b. Students who are currently working or have left a relevant position in an information service to start a LARIS course may be permitted to offer their past experience as a consideration for equivalency from the practicum.
c. Equivalency may be given in the form of either a total or partial reduction in the amount of time to be spent with a host organisation. In the past, many students eligible for a full equivalency have opted to seek a partial equivalency in order to broaden their practical experience.
d. Students seeking an equivalency must produce evidence of relevant work experience, including information regarding positions held and duties performed, dates of service (including months and years), and fractional time worked (e.g. full time or 0.5)
e. Ideally the supporting reference should be from a qualified professional, although at times this may not be possible. In these cases the reference should be from a manager/supervisor with sufficient knowledge and experience to assess the relevance of a student's work experience.

f. Cases will be considered individually by the LARIS Committee, which consists of the LARIS Discipline Lead, Practicum Program Coordinator, Course Coordinators as appropriate, and where possible, a student representative nominated by the Information Studies Student Association (ISSA) or its equivalent. The Committee will assess applications in accordance with the stated criteria and the evidence presented. The LARIS Committee reserves the right to determine what constitutes relevant and recent work experience.

g. Any student dissatisfied with a decision of the LARIS Committee should in the first instance discuss their concerns with the Practicum Program Coordinator. The student may request the Committee review the decision. If still dissatisfied, the student may lodge an appeal against the decision. The appeal must be in writing and must be submitted to the Head of School within 14 calendar days of the date the student was notified of the decision. The determination of the appeal will proceed in accordance with the Assessment Appeals procedure outlined in the Assessment and Student Progression Manual.

10.   RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ENSURING A SUCCESSFUL PRACTICUM

The organisation of a practicum is a complex task and it may be useful if some clarification is given on the levels of responsibility for different aspects of the practicums.

10.1   Responsibilities of the Practicum Program Coordinator

The Practicum Program Coordinator is responsible for:

1. Preparing the practicum material.
2. Organising the mentor/student database.
3. Updating forms and web sites relating to practicums.
4. Organising the practicum with the student and the Practicum Mentor.
5. Ensuring Practicum Mentors are aware of insurance coverage and the Student Placement Agreement.
6. Organising the completion of the Fieldwork Preliminary Risk Identification Form with the student.
7. Ensuring Practicum Mentors and students are contacted and supported during the practicum.
8. Managing assessment and evaluation of the student.

The initial communication with the Practicum Mentor is done by the Practicum Program Coordinator. This is because sometimes there are constraints unknown to the student; host organisations may have staffing and technology problems, a poor history of providing a good placement for students, or prior commitments to other practicum placements.

10.2   Responsibilities of the student

The student is responsible for:

1. Thoroughly reading practicum documentation.
2. Completing the relevant forms required for the organisation of the placement.
3. Monitoring their Curtin email account prior to, and during, the practicum period.
4. Planning the practicum with the Practicum Program Coordinator.
5. Liaising with the Practicum Mentor concerning the practicum. Attending the pre-prac meeting.
6. Where necessary, completing the Fieldwork Preliminary Risk Identification Form with the Practicum Program Coordinator.
7. Discussing a practicum project with the Practicum Mentor.
8. Contributing to the work of the host organisation.

9. Discussing with the Practicum Mentor, or other staff, ideas for their practicum-related assignment (if applicable). Work on the assignment should not be carried out during the practicum.
10. Reporting any problems, as soon as possible, to the Practicum Mentor and/or the Practicum Program Coordinator.
11. Writing a letter of thanks at the end of the practicum to the Practicum Mentor.
12. Submitting the assignment relating to the practicum (if applicable).
13. Completing the Student Evaluation of Practicum Form and returning this to the Practicum Program Coordinator within two weeks of completing the placement.

The student is expected to:

1. Be able to communicate in a professional manner with staff and clients.
2. Undertake the practicum without remuneration.
3. Work to the rostered staff times during the practicum including evenings and weekend work where applicable.
4. Treat all staff with respect and consideration.
5. Present him or herself in a professional manner.
6. Act ethically and responsibly with the host organisation, staff and clients.
7. Observe the host organisation's dress code.
8. Undertake all duties assigned to them during the practicum.
9. Observe public holidays taken by the host organisation.
10. Notify the Practicum Mentor at the beginning of the working day in cases of ill health. A medical certificate must be produced for any sick leave of more than two days.
11. Report to the Practicum Program Coordinator any significant loss of time at the practicum site due to illness or other problems so that decisions can be made about whether or not the student should make up this time.

10.3   Responsibilities of the Practicum Mentor

The Practicum Mentor should hold a relevant professional qualification and be employed by the host organisation. The Mentor shall be responsible for:

1. Approving the placement for the student and organising signing of the Student Placement Agreement.
2. Meeting with the student to discuss the practicum placement. (Pre-prac meeting)
3. Organising the work schedule for the student and providing the student with a practicum program. This schedule should cover the range of activities suited to the level of the student. For first year students these may be at a base organisational level but for third year, Graduate Diploma and Masters students this should encompass mainly professional duties. At all levels, depending on the work environment, some non-professional tasks may be undertaken.
4. Providing guidance by giving the student a thorough orientation to the workplace and integrating the student into the work environment and culture.
5. Offering guidance in the selection and management of a suitable practicum project. This project should be of benefit to both the host organisation and the student.
6. Allowing time for the student to discuss with their Mentor, or other staff, ideas for their practicum-related assignment (if applicable). Work on the assignment should not be carried out during the practicum.
7. Alerting the Practicum Program Coordinator, as soon as possible, should any issues arise that may impact on the success of the practicum, or the student's performance
8. Ensuring the student has regular feedback on his or her performance during the practicum, including a final debriefing session at the conclusion of the practicum in which an overall evaluation is discussed.
9. Evaluating the student at the end of the practicum using the Practicum Mentor's Evaluation Form to rate the student on a range of personal, professional and technological competencies.

10. Submitting the evaluation form to the Practicum Program Coordinator within two weeks of the completion of the practicum.
11. Inspiring and enthusing the student about the information profession.

11.   PRACTICUM PREPARATION

11.1   Security clearance

In certain circumstances students may require a police security clearance or a Working with Children Check before being allowed to undertake a practicum. Should any students have problems in this area, please contact the Practicum Program Coordinator before a placement is organised.

11.2   Financial situation

Students are required to meet any expenses involved in the practicum (i.e. travel, parking etc). Students will NOT be paid during the practicum.

Mentors are not paid for supervising students but are doing this as a professional activity, so all courtesy should be extended to them and other staff for their time and effort.

11.3   Student Placement Agreements, Fieldwork Preliminary Risk Identification and Curtin insurance

PLEASE NOTE THE UNIVERSITY CURRENTLY REQUIRES THE COMPLETION OF A COVID-19 DECLARATION FOR ALL STUDENTS ATTENDING APPROVED FIELDWORK.
https://students.curtin.edu.au/experience/employment/wil/fieldwork-preparation/

The University requires a written legal agreement for all fieldwork education experience. The legal agreement identifies and describes the responsibilities of the University, the host and students in the fieldwork activity. The agreement also outlines information on insurance provisions provided by the University to all parties prior to commencing the fieldwork activity. In consultation with the Practicum Program Coordinator, the Fieldwork Agreement will be initiated and completed by the host and the University prior to the commencement of the placement.

The University requires that a Fieldwork Online Risk Assessment is completed prior to the practicum to give a preliminary rating of whether fieldwork is low risk or whether further assessment is required to determine the risk. This online form will be completed by the student in conjunction with the Practicum Program Coordinator. It is important that students disclose pre-existing medical or other conditions.

Enrolled students of the University undertaking approved work/field experience are covered under the University Personal Accident Insurance Policy and Public Liability/Professional Indemnity Insurance Policy while involved in authorised activities. Student Personal Accident Information Sheet. Ensure this is read very carefully and you are familiar with the insurance coverage.

Cover under these policies may only be provided where:
- the work/field experience is a formal requirement of the student's course/unit;
- the School/Discipline Area/Area has approved the work/field experience;
- the student is an enrolled student of the University at the time of the work/field experience;
- the student does not receive any remuneration for the work experience placement (if the student is being paid, the student would be covered by the host organisation's workers' compensation policy)

Details of these policies are available at http://corporaterisk.curtin.edu.au/insurance/policies.cfm (NB: student number and password required to access policies).

Note: Because students receive no remuneration for the practicum they cannot make a workers' compensation claim for loss of income due to illness or injury.

12. ISSUES DURING PRACTICUMS

12.1 Personal problems

It is the student's responsibility to notify the Practicum Mentor and the Practicum Program Coordinator if illness prevents attendance at the placement. It is mandatory, as well as courteous, to phone such information through first thing in the morning and follow up with an email. A medical certificate must be presented if you are absent from work for more than two days through illness.

Should other matters intrude on the placement it is best to contact the Practicum Program Coordinator. In certain circumstances the practicum may have to be aborted. Decisions concerning whether or not the student may have to make up time resulting from illness or any other absence from work will be made at the discretion of the Practicum Program Coordinator and LARIS discipline lead.

It is best to contact the Practicum Program Coordinator as soon as a problem arises so that decisions can be made as quickly as possible.

12.2 Change of practicum placement

Although rare, at times practicum placements are not successful. A student showing due cause can request to be transferred from a placement at any time without penalty. Any request for a change to another placement during the course of a practicum must be discussed initially with the Practicum Program Coordinator. Any decision must be acceptable to all parties, including the Practicum Mentor. While there may be a variety of reasons for students requesting a change of placement, a situation where the student is not coping with the environment or the work cannot be judged sufficient cause to find a second placement. Inability to function in a work environment means failure of the practicum and subsequently the unit.

A Practicum Mentor may also request the removal of a student. In such a case the situation is assessed by the Practicum Program Coordinator and the LARIS discipline lead, and the student may be allocated another placement or fail the practicum.

The Practicum Program Coordinator may also remove a student from a placement if it is felt that the placement is not successful, either from the perspective of the student or the mentor. This is only done in consultation with the parties concerned.

Such decisions are not taken lightly and every situation is very carefully assessed. Reasons for problems with a practicum may be incompatibility between student and mentor; poor scheduling of duties so that the student becomes a 'dogs-body' and does not receive the appropriate work experience; complaints from mentors about the student which could include idleness, lack of enthusiasm, poor communication skills, an inability to work successfully with staff and clients, poor presentation in the work-place, and a lack of appropriate skills and knowledge.

NOTE: FAILURE OF A PRACTICUM CAN MEAN TERMINATION FROM THE COURSE. PROFESSIONAL COURSES REQUIRE THAT GRADUATES BE ABLE TO FUNCTION IN A PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY WITH GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS, ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE AND A PROFESSIONAL ETHOS.

13. CONDUCT ON PRACTICUM

Students should be aware at all times of the importance of the practicum in their development as a professional in their chosen careers. This means that students must learn to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner at all times. This includes:

Meeting the Practicum Mentor

> The initial visit (pre-prac meeting) to the library, records management and archives unit/centre or information centre should not be made on a 'drop in' basis. Appointments should be made with the Practicum Mentor and a formal meeting set up to introduce yourself.

Dress code

> Students should respect the dress standards required by the host organisation. If you are unsure please discuss this with your Practicum Mentor at the pre-prac meeting.

Personal hygiene

> Students should remember that in times of stress personal hygiene may need extra attention.

Acting professionally

> Good time-keeping is essential. Treat supervisors and other staff with appropriate respect, taking care with your interaction with users of the host service. It is wise not to jump to hasty conclusions about the workplace. Organisational dynamics are complex and warrant close attention and careful judgement. Organisational culture, processes and politics may only become evident over time.

Personal concerns

> Please try to put aside outside concerns so that you can give full attention to learning in your chosen profession. If personal problems become overwhelming, please contact the Practicum Program Coordinator for assistance.

COVID-19

> Please remember to take the Curtin University COVID-19 declaration with you on day 1 of placement and adhere to all host organisation requirements.

And, <u>last but not least!</u>

> Keep a sense of humour and enjoy the experience.

14. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS OF PRACTICUM

The practicum is an important learning experience. Students should watch closely, and be prepared to ask for advice, instruction or clarification if it is needed. People will only perform well if they understand their duties and their role and function within the host service. Do not be afraid to ask for instructions to be repeated if they are unclear the first time. Please have a notebook handy and use it.

It also helps if students have realistic expectations of the practicum.

For first-year students remember that this is still at a very formative stage in the course, and there will be many professional duties which students cannot be expected to undertake at this time. The student may be given work which is repetitive and tedious, however, it can all be part of the learning experience. It is important for students, as future managers, to be aware of practical processes and procedures undertaken by staff who they may supervise in the future.

Students are encouraged to approach the Practicum Mentor if there are any particular duties they are keen to undertake. This is best broached in the pre-prac meeting prior to the practicum so that rosters can be developed; however, should an issue of importance to the student become evident during the practicum, please request more experience in that area. If the student's desire to do something is not appropriate, and therefore not possible, discussing the situation with the Practicum Mentor will at least clarify the situation.

The practicum is an integral part of the educational program and is an opportunity for students to experience and understand the realities of working in an information service, to observe and learn the positive qualities and the constraints and limitations of the host service, and to put into practice the skills and knowledge already learnt at Curtin. However, please note the constraints and limitations under which the host service operates and remember there may be sound, if not immediately obvious, reasons for certain decisions and procedures. Do not be too hasty to judge!

Students should take time to reflect on both the theory and practice of professionalism and the ethics and ethos of the workplace, and should develop a thorough knowledge of the operation of the information service and the activities undertaken in providing services to users.

Students who make the best use of the learning opportunities of the practicum are those who can:
> be open and receptive to new experiences and ideas,
> accept and respect the host service by trying to understand its role and purpose and the constraints and limitations, under which it works,
> be positive and confident without being aggressive,
> connect the concepts and principles learnt in the course to the practices undertaken at the host service,
> carefully observe and reflect on professional issues. Comparison with the situation encountered in prior practicums or other work experience will provide the basis for new perceptions
> discuss issues of concern with your Practicum Mentor and other professional staff.

15.   INFORMATION FORWARDED TO THE PRACTICUM MENTOR

Prior to the commencement of your practicum the Practicum Mentor will receive an email with your details and a copy of your resume. Please ensure that on the Practicum Application Form you give permission for this personal information to be conveyed. The email to the Practicum Mentor will the following documents:

- *Guidelines for Practicum Mentors* which outlines the objectives and requirements of the practicum for both the student and host service.
- *Practicum Mentor's Evaluation Form*
- *Fieldwork Agreement*
- *Curtin University Insurance*

Students are encouraged to read the *Practicum Mentor's Evaluation Form* as this will form part of your assessment for the practicum and related-unit (see section 19.2). Please see the LARIS Blackboard site.

The emails sent to both the Practicum Mentor and student are the official confirmation of the practicum.

16.   LIAISON BETWEEN PRACTICUM PROGRAM COORDINATOR, MENTOR AND STUDENT

Where possible, LARIS staff will visit each student in the Perth metropolitan area once during their placement. Extra visits can be arranged at the request of either the student or the Practicum Mentor. The Practicum Program Coordinator or another member of staff is available by appointment for meetings and discussions either at the University or at the host service.

LARIS staff will contact students outside of the Perth metropolitan area and their mentors by telephone and/or email during the practicum period. Students may contact the Practicum Program Coordinator if there are any problems.

17.   CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS – POSSIBLE DUTIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN

The following checklists are to be considered only as a guide to the type of duties students may be expected to perform. They are not definitive or prescriptive; students may not experience all of these duties or may be required to undertake other duties not listed.

Practicum Mentors will be asked to provide students with a practicum program providing a general structure of assigned duties and activities during the practicum period and to hold discussions with the student explaining how these tasks fit within the overall service.

Practicum Mentors are asked to assign the student **a specific task** or **small project** which will be their own area of responsibility during the practicum (see Section 17.3).

17.1   First-year students
Please note the undergraduate qualification is being phased out by November 2022. The first year placement unit is now only available via OUA, SP1, 2021.

First-year undergraduate students will undertake a range of specified tasks but should observe the organisational culture and ethos, and reflect on the management structure and the environment of the placement venue. Although mainly involved in clerical work, students at this level should begin to think strategically regarding professional issues and be given an introduction to professional duties and responsibilities.

17.1.1   Possible tasks for students working in a <u>Library and Information Service</u>
First-year students in an LIS environment are expected to fulfil duties typical of a junior library assistant/library clerk with the individual host service. This checklist is only a guide to the type of duties students may be expected to perform.

- Shelving and shelf checking
- Desk duties for charging and discharging loans
- Processing membership records
- Processing readers' requests
- Checking readers' requests against loans and shelves
- Maintaining loan records
- Sending out recalls or overdues
- Inter-library loans
- Processing new items of stock
- Copy cataloguing
- Circulation of journals
- Filing microfiche
- Cleaning and repairing books
- Preparing flyers and brochures
- Assisting with outreach activities such as homebound services, holiday activities, storytelling and children's activities
- Data inputting to the automated catalogue
- Preparing reports of student's project
- Assisting with promotional activities and in-house newsletters
- Scanning of documents
- Searching online databases, at a basic level
- Assisting clients with Internet access, at a basic level
- Assisting reference staff
- Assisting clients with equipment such as scanners, photocopiers, wifi
- Allocating bookings for publicly available technology

17.1.2   Possible tasks for students working in a <u>Corporate Information/Records Service</u>
First-year students in a corporate information/records service are expected to fulfil duties typical of a junior records clerk with the individual host organisation. This checklist is only a guide to the type of duties students may be expected to perform.

- Processing paper-based mail, including
    - Sorting incoming mail
    - Recording mail statistics
    - Mail distribution
    - Processing outgoing mail
- Processing electronic mail
    - Registering incoming correspondence into EDRMS
    - Assigning business classification levels

Assigning retention schedules to records

Routing to action officers

Creating and maintaining physical and electronic folders

Attaching records to files

File tracking and audits

Scanning of records, including preparation for scanning

Searching for and retrieving files

Rehousing archival records

Processing file requests

Retrieval, issuing and reshelving of records and archives

Checking for missing files and records

Quality assurance of scanned images

Assisting with promotional activities and in-house newsletters

Searching databases, at a basic level

Assisting clients with online file retrieval

17.2 Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters students:

17.2.1 Possible tasks for students working in a <u>Library and Information Service</u>

Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters students undertaking a practicum in an LIS environment are expected to fulfil duties typical of a junior professional with the individual host service. Depending on the host organisation, students may be required to undertake some clerical duties as indicated in the first-year practicum checklist above but this should not occupy the majority of the practicum. This checklist is only a guide to the type of duties students may be expected to perform.

<u>Professional duties</u>

Conducting bibliographical searches in printed and electronic formats

Answering reference enquiries by telephone, in person and by electronic access

Selecting and ordering new material for library stock in any format including analysing quality of materials available on the Internet and evaluating databases

Indexing and abstracting items

Accessioning, classifying and cataloguing new stock

Preparing current awareness bulletins

Organisation of promotional activities, such as displays

Promoting the service to users and non-users

Preparing in-house newsletters, flyers and brochures

Designing and maintaining web-pages

Developing databases and intranets

Undertaking outreach activities such as homebound services, holiday activities, storytelling and children's activities

Offering or assisting with information literacy skills training to clients, such as the use of databases and the Internet

Undertaking specific projects which require self-directed work

Attending meetings, interacting with staff

Writing reports, preparing presentations

Researching and assessing potential technologies and equipment for implementation

Updating the library/information service's social media presence

17.2.2 Possible tasks for students working in a <u>Corporate Information/Records Service</u>

Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters students undertaking a practicum in a corporate information/records service are expected to fulfil duties typical of a junior professional with the individual host service. Depending on the host organisation, students may be required to undertake some clerical duties as listed in the first-year practicum checklist above but this should not occupy the majority of the practicum. This checklist is only a guide to the type of duties students may be expected to perform.

Professional duties

> Data management tasks, such as migration of data and editing
> More complex retrieval requests
> Records surveys and audits and development of disposal schedules
> Appraisal of closed files and more complex items against approved R&D schedule
> Update and create new records in an EDRMS, archives management system or other business system
> Preparation of closed files for disposal
> Creation of destruction authority lists and archival transmittal and consignment lists
> Assisting in the preparation of selected records for archival storage
> Answering enquiries by telephone, in person, in written form, and by electronic access
> Indexing/classification of incoming items using controlled language
> Promoting the service to users and non-users, such as in-house newsletters, flyers and brochures
> Assisting with policy development, such as an organisational information policy
> Preparing user manuals
> Analysing and evaluating the application of software
> Attending meetings, interacting with staff
> Writing reports, preparing presentations

17.3   Project work

Practicum Mentors are asked that in addition to the specified tasks above, students be assigned a **small project** which will be their own area of responsibility during the practicum. This will provide students with an opportunity for self-directed, independent project work that may be undertaken during 'free' times within the practicum program. The nature of the project should be determined by the Practicum Mentor in consultation with the student so as to be of benefit to the host organisation and the future career of the student. The scope of the project should allow for it to be completed within the time-frame of the placement and should take into account the student's level of experience.

The Practicum Program Coordinator asks students to consider their skill sets and interests and to discuss possible project work with attending the pre-practicum meeting. It may be feasible for students to complete a number of small projects, depending on the nature of the project work and the overarching practicum program

First-year students may complete a project report. However, all students are encouraged to keep a reflective practice journal and should be encouraged to reflect on any project undertaken, as well as other activities and experiences whilst on practicum.

Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters students may be asked by Practicum Mentors to write a report on their project. This report **will not** form part of the assessment for the unit associated with the practicum. However, students at this level may consider using issues arising from their practicum project as the basis for later assignments, when appropriate. Students at this level should be challenged by the project work. Students are encouraged to consider small research based projects to develop the notion of practitioner researchers. All students are encouraged to keep a reflective practice journal and to reflect on any project undertaken, as well as other activities and experiences whilst on practicum.

18.   REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

The practicum should be used as a time to observe, record, and reflect on the corporate culture of the host institution, events and activities undertaken, problems encountered and issues raised. This reflection should assist students in understanding the fundamental management of successful information services and should provide a backdrop for assignments and future study.

18.1 Keeping a reflective practice journal

All students are encouraged to keep a journal to help reflect on the practicum experience and to assist with the development of ideas for practicum assignments (if applicable).

Use the practicum experience to note your own developing understanding of the service and the activities you have been engaged in. Holly (1989) recommends that you record notes as soon after an event as possible while it is still fresh in your mind. Diarists recommend that the journal be written up at a time when you have peace and quiet and time to reflect. Perhaps it may be best to divide the journal (document) into daily sections (part of the time a description of the activities of the day, part a reflection of how much you understood or did not understand, and part a series of questions you need to ask the next day to fully understand what took place).

The following points are taken loosely from Holly (1989).

    Observe closely
    Date all your journal entries
    Write with as much detail as possible
    Allow free flow of ideas (freewheeling)
    A short autobiography at the beginning of the journal can help centre you for the rest of the journal
    Allow time and space to add your reflections of what took place during the day
    Present portraits of people
    Describe events and activities minutely (if you can explain the activity to your journal accurately, then you understand it)
    Be aware of your own prejudices when writing and check later if these observations are accurate
    Ensure confidentiality of all information given to you
    Note your changes of attitude over time, including your understanding of organisation culture and politics, activities and people

Your working journal should serve as a tool to describe and evaluate your observations and experiences during practicum e.g. various tasks and activities undertaken and the importance of such activities, problems that occurred and any unresolved issues you need to explore further during your practicum or later, observations on the physical situation, specific events, your role, actions taking place, people involved in the workplace and their feelings and observations, and your impressions and interpretations of actions or events. It is important that the journal contain your reflections and thoughts during the period of the practicum so that at the end you can analyse your progress and your increased understanding of the organisational culture.

You may also wish to use your journal to gather and record additional information during your practicum to provide a basis for discussion in tutorials and online discussion. While some students may not feel that they will use this journal in preparing practicum assignments, it may be useful in developing your general knowledge for other units.

Please also note that Narelle Hampe, Student Liaison Librarian within the Central Coast Local Health District Libraries for the University of Newcastle's Ourimbah Campus Library has published a set of guidelines on reflective practice. These guidelines are now available through the ALIA website's professional development page. This article is a synthesis of reflective practice literature and serves to guide and remind us of the importance of reflecting, no matter what work environment we are involved in. Please see the following link:

Reference

Hampe, N. (2013). Reflective practice and writing: a guide to getting started. Retrieved from http://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/Reflective.Practice.Writing.Guide2013 0409JB.pdf

Holly, M. L. (1989*). Writing to grow: Keeping a personal-professional journal.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann.

18.2   Checklist for reflective practice

You may wish to use this checklist to develop ideas for your reflective practice journal or practicum-related assignments. The following is just a broad list of topics and is not meant to be prescriptive:

Issues relating to the hardware, software, and networks in use in the host organisation
Use of intranets, websites and social media
Reference services (online, alerting services, etc.)
Operational activities
Experience with retrieval of print, non-print and electronic resources
Evaluation of collections
Training programs for clients
Organisational culture
Management styles and techniques

In order to develop knowledge of the work situation, ask yourself about the following:

Role of the Host Service

Consider the overall aims and functions of the service. What is its mission statement? How well does it reflect the mission statement of the parent authority? Does the service have a strategic plan for the next 5 years? What are its goals and objectives for the next 5 years?
What are the defined roles of the service? How are these roles presented to the parent authority and the community?
What is the community served? What services are being provided to the community?
What is the relationship of the service to its governing body? How does this relationship affect the role, activities and funding of the service? In general, how appreciative of the service is the parent organisation?
What planning policies exist?
Does the library have a separate technology or digital strategy? Does the library contribute to the technology or digital strategy of the parent body?

Physical Environment

External Features

Observe the siting of the service. Is it accessible and central to all its users regardless of physical ability? For public services, do factors such as adequate public transportation, car parking or street lighting have to be taken into consideration?
Is the service adequately signposted from outside and from important entrance ways (i.e. roads, corridors, footpaths) leading to the service?
Is the building architecturally attractive and inviting as well as functional? Was the building planned with forethought to satisfy future needs and expansion? Is the layout of the library or registry and/or offices and work areas well done? Does the layout and design affect the nature or quality of the service to users?

Internal Features

Is there adequate room to accommodate the books/records/materials/technology comfortably and efficiently? Does it allow for reasonable user movement?
Does the workroom area have adequate space, light, and ventilation? Are there sufficient desks, shelves and trolleys for all jobs to be carried out efficiently? Is the storage space adequate?
Is the lighting bright enough or will it cause eye strain? Is there adequate air movement or air conditioning? Is the best use made of natural lighting?
Is the furniture and shelving functional and efficient, as well as aesthetically pleasing?
In the case of services open to the public, are the rest rooms accessible and adequate? Has consideration been given to the other community/cultural/educational/commercial groups

using the library or offices for meetings/discussions/lectures etc.? Are there promotional facilities for exhibitions or posters presenting information on new services and collections?

Customer Services

What services does the organisation offer to clients?

Is the library/records centre committed to a client-focused organisation?

Do the users seem satisfied with the services they receive? Has the organisation undertaken a user survey in the past two years?

How do they evaluate user satisfaction? Are they trying to attract non-users? If so, how?

Personnel

What is the level of staffing? Is there an organisational structure available? What is the percentage of qualified staff to non-qualified staff?

Does this ratio seem adequate to provide the necessary services? Does this structure tally with the standards set by the professional association?

Do staff operate in teams and are their input and skills valued?

Does the service have an orientation or induction program for new employees?

Are staff adequately trained? What training courses are made available to staff?

Does the service conduct in-service programs or encourage staff to enrol in other training programs or courses to enhance work skills?

What is the manager's role and what level of responsibility and status does that person have in the parent organisation? What are some of the duties undertaken by the manager?

Are staff encouraged to undertake continuing professional development courses? Are members of staff studying in formal courses? Which courses are they undertaking and why?

Are staff members of the professional association? Do they support the aims and objectives of the professional association?

Communication

How does the library or records centre communicate with the parent authority?

How does the manager communicate with staff? Are there regular staff meetings, newsletters, bulletin boards (electronic and manual) and intranets?

Are staff within the library or records centre isolated from staff in the parent authority?

Does the library/records centre have representation on planning bodies of the funding authority?

Promotion

How does the library or records centre promote itself to both the clients and the funding body?

Is there a marketing plan in place? Is there a budget for marketing?

Provide some examples of promotion and publicity.

Does the library have a social media presence? Does the library have a strategy for its social media presence? Does the library have a publicly available social media policy?

Technical resources

Information and library services

What integrated automated library system is in use? Does the service use RFID technology or have plans to? What are the issues relating to RFID? What types of catalogues are there? How easy are they to use? What level of cataloguing is used in this system? Is there access to special collections through the automated system? How easily accessible is information through the OPAC, and how well designed is the screen? Do clients have sufficient terminals to easily access the online catalogue?

Are there indexes for special collections which are not in the catalogue? How are these indexes organised?

What facilities are there for making reservations and inter-library loans?

What facilities are there for recovering or charging for lost or damaged books? Are these facilities effective?

What cooperative networking arrangements exist with other libraries? Does the library have access to other library catalogues and online databases?

What type of circulation system is used? What are its advantages/ disadvantages?

Are there database searching facilities, electronic mail or other new technological developments used by the library? How is the electronic mail used? What skills are required to use them? Do the staff train clients to use these services?

Are items on hold placed on a public shelf for self-service or do users have to ask staff for access? How are these arranged (e.g. Dewey number, user surname)?

Does the library have self-service loans? How is their use encouraged? What is the attitude of the users to them? What is the attitude of the staff to them?

Does the library have self-service returns (where the user actually discharges the item themselves at a workstation)? How is its use encouraged? What is the attitude of the users to them? What is the attitude of the staff to them?

What information can a client access from home? Personal details? Items on loan? Reservations? Online databases that require library membership?

Has the library implemented a Discovery Layer product?

Records management services

What basic services does the registry provide?

Are there any automated record control systems in use? Do these have good information retrieval capabilities? What staff training is provided in the use of the automated system?

Does the organisation have an intranet? Who is responsible for maintaining this system? How effective is it?

How useful is the system for file tracking? What thesaurus is used? How effective is it?

How is file tracking and bringing up files achieved?

Are there many missing files and how are missing files located? How easy is it to look for missing files and documents? How easy is it to log in correspondence?

How well developed is their website? Who manages this? How effective is it?

Stock

Information and library services

How large is the collection and what is its composition? What formats are included in the stock? Are there any weaknesses, strengths or special features of the collection? What is the acquisition policy and procedures? Is there a written policy and manual?

Who does the selection of stock? What criteria are used for the selection of new stock? Is the collection well used or are certain areas used more than others, if so, why?

How digitised in the library service? Do clients receive information via the Internet, online databases, etc?

Does the reference collection include online encyclopaedias, dictionaries, bibliographical databases, etc? How are these used by clients? Are they easily accessible to clients?

Does the library provide access to ebooks? Can these be downloaded to users' own devices and read offline? Is the range of ebooks varied and suitable for the type of library?

Does the library provide any technological devices so that library users can find out more about them? (E.g. Movie editing on an Apple Mac, ebook reading devices)

Does the library have any adaptive facilities for people with disabilities to use the stock (E.g. Separate study area, wheelchair accessible OPACs, screen magnifiers or readers)

Does the library use any filtering software to restrict any sites on the internet? How does the library publicise this?

Does the library use any automated booking product for public access to library PCs? Does the library have any product that restores public access PCs to a "clean" state after a public access session (e.g. Deep Freeze)? How is software on public access PCs kept up to date? What software is available for public use on internet PCs?

Are there enough public access PCs?

Does the library allow users to use their own storage media such as USB drives on public PCs?

Does the library maintain an institutional or research data repository?

Does the library provide copyright advice and information to users?

Records management services

How many files are held in the records centre? Are there any weaknesses, strengths or special features of the filing system?

How is material archived? Who is responsible for archiving? Are archives held onsite or transferred elsewhere? Do individual departments hold their own collection of files?

Is there a disposal schedule? Who is responsible for updating this?

Is the records centre amalgamated with a library service?

Service, programs and outreach

Information and library services

What services are offered by the library?

Do the users seem satisfied with the existing services?

Does the library offer any extra services such as audio-visual material, housebound reader services, toys, games, holiday activities, acquisition lists, indexing or journal articles, reader education or any others of the many that could be offered?

Does the library provide any technological devices?

What outreach programs exist? How are these managed and evaluated?

Does the library have a big screen display that publicises programs and services? Who maintains this and is it kept current?

Records management services

What services are offered? How are these services evaluated by users?

Does the records centre provide facilities such as photocopiers, email access, and web management facilities for the convenience of users?

Finance

What are the primary sources of funds? Does the librarian or records manager have input or control over the allocation of funding to the library or records service?

What factors does the manager take into account when formulating the budget? Does the funding authority impose any constraints on the services and on future developments?

What are future plans? How do they budget?

External Relationships

Information and library services

Do the library staff meet and work with other agencies and groups in the community?

What are the relationships with other information handling departments such as information systems and the records centre? Are the organisational archives in the library or records centre?

Does the library have any informal or formal relationships with other libraries?

How involved are staff with the information profession?

Records management services

What are the relationships with other information handling departments such as data processing and the library? Is there information over which records officers have no or little control?

Are the organisational archives in the library or records centre?

How involved are staff with the information profession?

Access to the web

How far is this collection digitised? What formats are digitised? How well are they indexed?

How is the website designed? Does it have links to policy documents and other publications of the information service? Do staff have web pages?

Is there a web page of links to other important sites?

What material is placed on the website? What are the future plans for making material available online? Who maintains the website?

Who uses the website? How is use identified?

Is the library website part of the parent-body website? How does this affect how it can be managed, the design elements and what information can be published there?

Do the library staff use any web analytics programs to assess usage of the website (e.g. Google Analytics)?

Training

What is the policy of the information service to training clients to use facilities and services?

What training programs are there in place?

Entrepreneurial activities

What entrepreneurial activities (if any) are organised by the information service? What is the rationale behind such activities? Is the organisation expected to raise funds?

Strengths and weakness of the organisation

Identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and do a SWOT analysis. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats).

18.3   Student portfolios

Students are encouraged to develop electronic/hardcopy portfolios of projects and other work undertaken during their course. This includes collecting relevant material from the practicum placement. The practicum portfolio may include publicly available information such as brochures, flyers and other promotional material. However, students may wish to retain for their portfolio, copies of internal reports and documents. Students must check with the Practicum Mentor before collecting any information from the host organisation that is not in the public domain. There may be important issues of privacy and confidentiality at stake.

19.   ASSESSSMENT OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

All students must be able to demonstrate to both the Practicum Mentor and Practicum Program Coordinator that they have managed to relate class learning to operational experience in their host service. In addition, students must also be able to demonstrate that they have a sound grasp of both the theory and practice of the relevant area of study and the requisite skills and knowledge to become practitioners.

The student's performance will be evaluated in a number of ways:

The assignments for the practicum-related unit (see the relevant unit outline)

Evaluation by the Practicum Mentor of the student's performance whilst on practicum

Evaluation by a LARIS staff member

Self-evaluation of the practicum placement and student's performance

19.1   Assignments

Relevant unit outlines will provide students with information about assignments. Please note no assignments relate directly to the placement.

Masters students undertaking their second placement have assignments **that may be** informed by the practicum experience. At the commencement of the semester/study period, the Unit Coordinator for Information Theory & Research will guide students in the selection of an appropriate assignment topic, which may be drawn from the student's practicum experience. This may be based on:

- a project the student worked on that they would like to investigate further,
- an issue raised by the Practicum Mentor that requires deeper examination, or
- an issue relating to the services and/or operations of the information service that has sparked the student's interest.

Please note: students do not need to consider their assignment topic during the practicum and those who undertake their practicum after the unit's coursework are not disadvantaged.

19.2   Evaluation of the student by the Practicum Mentor

Assessment will include an evaluation of the student's performance by the Practicum Mentor. The *Practicum Mentor's Evaluation Form* is available on the LARIS Blackboard site. Students are encouraged to read this form prior to the practicum as it will form part of your assessment for the practicum and related-unit.

Mentors are asked to discuss the evaluation form with the student at the conclusion of the practicum and, if possible, provide the student with a copy at this time. However, it may not be possible or convenient for the mentor to finalise the form by the end of the placement period. If students do not receive the completed form at the conclusion of the practicum, or from the Practicum Mentor at a later date, they will be able to request a copy from the Practicum Program Coordinator.

Many students will use the *Practicum Mentor's Evaluation Form* for employment purposes.

19.3   Evaluation by LARIS staff

For all practicum placements, the Practicum Program Coordinator or a LARIS staff member will contact Practicum Mentors to check on the progress of students. If possible, students will be contacted at these times as well.

Each student in the Perth metropolitan area will receive one visit during their placement. Extra visits can be arranged at the request of either the student or the Practicum Mentor. For practicums outside of Perth, students and their Practicum Mentors will be contacted by telephone or email once during the practicum. In all cases, Practicum Mentors and students may contact the Practicum Program Coordinator as often as necessary throughout the placement.

19.4   Student evaluation of the placement

Students must complete an evaluation of the placement and the practicum process. This helps plan future practicums and also gives the Practicum Program Coordinator feedback on the suitability of the information service for future student practicums. Perhaps, more importantly, self-reflection is an important part of professional development.

The *Student Evaluation of Practicum Form* is available from LARIS Blackboard site and must be submitted within two weeks of the completion of the practicum. Submission of the Evaluation Form is a requirement for successful completion of the practicum.

20.   PRACTICUM PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The Practicum Program Coordinator is:

> **Rebecca (Bec) Shillington**
> Libraries, Archives, Records and Information Science (LARIS)
> School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry (MCASI)
> Curtin University
> E: MCASIPrac@curtin.edu.au

Where possible, please contact by email using the email address above rather than the Coordinator's Curtin email address. Please allow 2-3 days for a response to your enquiry. Should the matter be very urgent please contact the School office on (08) 9266 2717. If no answer is received in the designated timeframe please contact again.

Enjoy your practicum!