Indiana University Bloomington  
Department of Information  
and Library Science  

Z702/Z703 Research Practicum Full Guidelines

**Purpose**  
The Doctor of Philosophy is a research degree and it is incumbent upon the prospective student to begin the process of learning to conduct independent research as early as possible in his or her doctoral studies. Some of this learning will come through classroom study; however, research is a process which must be learned through experience as well as classes. The purpose of the doctoral research practicum is to begin providing this experience in a structured, supervised setting.

**Requirements**  
All ILS doctoral students must satisfactorily complete one semester of Z702 and one semester of Z703 before taking Z710. The 3-credit research practa are open only to students enrolled in the ILS doctoral program and are graded by the supervising faculty member.

**When and with whom practica are conducted**  
The two research practica must begin within two semesters after completing Z701. During each practicum, the student will assist a ILS faculty member in some ongoing aspect of his or her research. The two semesters must be taken during the first three consecutive semesters during which the student is enrolled following Z701.

Consecutive in this context refers to consecutive Spring and Fall semesters. Students may elect to take one practicum during the summer provided they receive written permission from the practicum coordinator. Only one semester of research practicum may be taken by a student in summer.

Practica may only be taken with ILS faculty. In order to gain a broad background in research practices, doctoral students will normally conduct research with different faculty members during each practicum semester. Exceptions will not normally be granted, although students may continue their research projects as independent studies. Independent study may not be substituted for the research practicum.

Students are not normally allowed to work independently on research topics for either Z702 or Z703. Students work on independent research during the Z710 course.

**Practicum Selection**  
ILS faculty members will present a brief written synopsis of current research projects on which they are willing to work with and supervise doctoral students. The practicum coordinator will distribute these synopses to the doctoral students toward the end of each semester, and the students will then be responsible for contacting the faculty member and agreeing on a program of research.

The objective of the research practicum is to expose the doctoral student to the experience of research in ILS. This may mean that an individual will work on a project that is not directly concerned with his or her individual research interests. Specific practica will be available according to the individual faculty who are willing to work on them. Students have the option of suggesting research topics to faculty; however, the students are obligated to choose from among the available practica if no other options can be arranged. Students may not defer practica based solely on the availability of offerings during a semester.

The acceptance of a doctoral student is at the discretion of the faculty member. (See Faculty Responsibilities.)

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The Practicum Contract
Once a student and a faculty member have agreed upon a practicum experience, they are responsible for drafting a practicum contract. This contract should be submitted to the practicum coordinator by the end of the first week of the semester in which the practicum is to be carried out. The contract is intended to specify the rights and responsibilities of both the student and the faculty member.

The contract must contain the following information:

1. Student and faculty name.
2. Project name.
3. One paragraph description of the research.
4. Specifications of the student's work on the research project to include specific outcomes or products (e.g., a written report) together with dates of completion.
5. Signature and date of the student, the faculty member and the practicum coordinator.
6. Statement of the supervising faculty member that the practicum has been completed successfully.

The contract will be reviewed by the practicum coordinator to ensure that the terms of the practicum conform to the specifications listed under faculty responsibilities.

Faculty Responsibilities
The practicum should be a structured learning experience for the doctoral student. Students in the course are participants in the research experience, not graduate assistants. As part of the process of having students assist in research, faculty are obliged to provide experiences for doctoral students that meet the following criteria:

1. The research must provide the doctoral student with complex, practical research experience. Students may perform some clerical and repetitive tasks as part of the experience, but these cannot constitute the majority of the practicum work. It is understood that the sophistication and depth of a student's involvement may be limited initially by his or her inexperience, but it is the responsibility of the faculty sponsor to structure the practicum in a way that allows the student to increase his or her expertise. This can include additional reading for the student provided it fits within the normal weekly workload specified below.
2. The research duties must be assigned with a reasonable expectation that they can be completed within one semester. This assumes a workload on the part of the student of approximately ten hours per week. Research that extends beyond the semester end is not encouraged but may be negotiated on a case by case basis. A practicum that extends beyond one semester still counts only as one practicum.
3. The research practicum must be constructed such that the normal range of ILS doctoral students could engage in it. While it is expected that not all practica will be within the capabilities of all students, faculty members who propose research projects will do so with the expectation that students will fill them. Projects will not normally be accepted by the practicum coordinator if they require research skills that ILS doctoral students do not possess in their first two years of study. (Exceptions may be made by the practicum coordinator to take advantage of the skills of exceptional students.)

If a faculty member rejects a practicum student, the faculty member has the responsibility for demonstrating specifically why the student has been rejected.

Student Responsibilities
Students are enrolled in practica to expose them to the experience of research under the guidance of a faculty member. This may require additional study to become familiar with a research topic, technique, or research in an area that is not connected with the student's personal research interests. If a doctoral student fails to be accepted for a research project in a semester in which he or she must participate in the practicum course, then the student must inform the practicum coordinator who will take steps to have the student assigned to a practicum project.
Students are expected to conduct their practica responsibilities in a professional manner. This assumes that the student performs his or her research duties with a reasonable level of effort and initiative. Faculty have the responsibility to provide guidance, but it is also expected that doctoral students will work with a minimum of direct supervision.

**Practicum Coordinator Responsibilities**
The practicum course will be supervised by a faculty member. The course is an overload in the same manner as other doctoral courses. The coordinator's duties include the following:

1. Insuring that all doctoral students are placed in a practicum for the semesters in which they are required to participate. The coordinator is responsible for negotiating placement in a practicum according to the rules specified below if a placement cannot be found under normal placement procedures.
2. Reviewing practicum contracts to ensure that they are equitable to both parties (i.e., that the workload, time constraints and quality of the experience are within the guidelines for practicum research projects).
3. Initially reviewing the practica submitted by faculty members to insure that the practica are within the capabilities of ILS doctoral students.
4. The coordinator is also responsible for mediating disputes between students and their sponsoring faculty members. The faculty member makes the final determination concerning the successful completion of a practicum. There may be instances in which the student has a grievance concerning the resolution of the practicum (e.g., continuing beyond the specified ending period, excessive workload, insufficient exposure to research, etc.). In these cases the coordinator will act to resolve the differences and protect the interests of both the student and faculty member.
5. The coordinator solicits new practica from faculty each semester and maintains a file of practica currently available for students.

**Doctoral students who fail to obtain a practicum placement**
If a doctoral student fails to obtain a practicum placement in the semester in which he or she must participate, the following procedures will occur:

1. The practicum coordinator will first meet with the student to elicit areas of research interest and attempt to set up a practicum with an appropriate faculty member in that area. Faculty members who have not submitted a practicum and who have not committed to work with the student as part of the admissions process are not required to create a practicum research project for the student in these cases.
2. The practicum coordinator will contact any faculty member who has rejected the student and review with him or her the basis for rejection.
   a. The coordinator will review the basis for rejection there are intellectual reasons and attempt to negotiate a practicum that is within the capabilities of the student.
   b. If there are too few practica or the reasons for rejecting a student are justified, the coordinator will request one of the faculty that arranged to work with the student (as part of the admissions process) to formulate a practicum.

**Practicum Meetings**
The practicum course has no lectures or scheduled class time. Students meet throughout the semester with their sponsoring faculty member to work on their joint research project and discuss their experiences.