**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH**

**Program in Visual Impairment and Blindness**

# TLL 2857 - LEVEL III – O&M Internship Practicum

**This document serves as a syllabus and outline for the requirements and expectations for the O&M Internship. We ask that both the O&M intern and the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor carefully read this document and sign it in order to indicate that the document has been read and the guidelines have been accepted.**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Level III O&M Internship Practicum is to give the O&M intern the opportunity to extend her or his practice teaching of orientation and mobility (O&M), full-time, under the supervision and guidance of an experienced and Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals (ACVREP) certified O&M specialist. The underlying purpose of this experience is to provide the intern the opportunity to demonstrate competence in teaching O&M skills (i.e., sighted guide, street crossings) effectively in simple (e.g., indoors) and complex (e.g., outdoor business) settings. Because the internship is the culminating experience of the O&M program, it is expected that the candidate is able to successfully perform as a novice instructor would under the mentorship of the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor at the placement site and the support and guidance of a University Supervisor. The successful completion of this experience means that the O&M intern will be eligible for professional O&M certification through ACVREP.

**PLACEMENT LENGTH**

In order to comply with ACVREP standards for O&M certification, the O&M intern is to complete a minimum of 350 clock hours of discipline-specific O&M instruction. Of the minimum 350 hours, at least 250 hours must be acquired in the category of direct contact of which 50 must be planning for those lessons. The remaining 100 hours can be acquired in the other four categories.

## *Discipline-Specific O&M Instruction Categories:*

1. Direct Contact (this includes direct observation of lessons with clients, observation or execution of an O&M assessment, and direct instruction)
2. Planning and Preparation for Lessons/Assessments
3. Conferences and Meetings either regarding clients or with supervisors regarding internship
4. Staff Development
5. Extra-Curricular Activities with clients

The length of the internship is between 12 and 14-weeks (depending upon the placement and whether the O&M Intern has fulfilled the O&M clinical competencies and attained the required number of hours of direct contact). If the intern reaches 350 hours before the completion of the internship, he or she must continue the internship until the agreed upon end date, unless the clinical internship supervisor and/or agency supervisor determine otherwise. If the intern does not acquire the 350 hours by the agreed upon end date, the internship will be extended until the hours are acquired or a second internship will need to be completed.

**Up to two sick** **days** are allowed during this clinical experience. If more than two days are missed, the intern will need to somehow make up the time (possibly extending the placement). An intern is to follow agency or school policy regarding contacting the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor and if necessary, relevant clients on the days missed. If leave time is requested for other reasons, the intern will need to make the request for leave to the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor five days in advance. Those days will also need to be made up at some point during the clinical experience.

**TEACHING AND EVALUATING EXPERIENCES**

In the beginning of the internship, the O&M intern will need a **minimum** of two weeks of observations of the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor teaching **and** evaluating O&M with their clients. During this time period, the O&M intern can begin teaching and evaluating assigned clients with the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor observing these lessons. When the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor feels comfortable in the O&M intern’s abilities and skill, a "lighter" observation schedule may be arranged.

During the internship experience, the O&M intern should be provided with a variety of teaching experiences applicable to the clientele he or she is assigned to serve. The ACVREP standards stress the importance of being capable of demonstrating competence in serving the O&M needs of clients whose vision loss varies from total blindness to low vision; whose cognitive functioning may involve limitations; whose age range varies; and whose travel needs are diverse to include sighted guide to advanced travel training in complex environments.

Equally important are the evaluation and assessment skills that the intern obtains during this period. Each intern has had multiple experiences developing O&M assessments and implementing those instruments so the intern should not need very much support in this area; however, the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor should observe how the O&M intern manages this task and be ready to intervene if necessary.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

## O&M Student Intern

The University of Pittsburgh O&M intern is primarily responsible to the host school or agency, and should follow school or agency policy regarding cancellation/illness procedures, transportation, etc. Communication between the intern and the University Supervisor should be consistent and occur weekly, especially in the first few weeks of the placement. Responsibility for this will be shared between the intern and University Supervisor. Telephone calls and e-mail are appropriate forms of communication. The intern should also feel comfortable in contacting the University Supervisor at home if having difficulty reaching the University Supervisor in the office. As the intern progresses and demonstrates more independence, these contacts can be reduced.

***Weekly Time Report***

Every week the O&M intern is to complete a weekly time report in order to log the number of hours he or she spent observing, teaching, conducting assessments, planning & preparing, traveling to and from clients, attending conferences and meetings regarding clients, participating in staff development, and engaging in any extracurricular activities. Be sure to accurately keep track of previous and cumulative hours as these will be monitored.

This document needs to be submitted electronically each Sunday by 5:00pm. During the internship, the O&M intern is to review the weekly time report with the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor but only the FINAL week’s report needs to be signed by the Field Site Supervisor and mailed to the University Supervisor. Each time sheet is worth 5 points. Full credit will be given for reports submitted on time and accurately completed. Those submitted late will receive a deduction of 1 point per day late. Those completed inaccurately will receive a deduction of 1 point per error. The error deduction points can be earned back once the mistake is corrected. The points deducted because of late submissions cannot be earned back.

***Reflective Journal***

During the O&M internship, the intern will be required to develop and maintain a reflective journal that documents all the lessons **observed.** The journal must include a DAILY entry for EVERY lesson observed. For each observation, the journal MUST include the following. EACH journal entry is worth 15 points and will be graded using this point system:

* First name of client / student (1 pt)
* Description of the client’s eye condition and the functional implications (2 pts)
* Comments about the client’s overall personality and willingness to participate in the lesson (1 pt)
* Lesson location (1pt)
* Goal of the lesson (1 pt)
* Specific objectives taken to reach the goal (5 pt)
* What will be the goal for the next lesson (2 pts)
* State one specific thing you learned regarding instructional strategies and one specific thing you learned regarding observation skills (2 pts)

Journals should be submitted electronically every Sunday by 5:00 pm and contain the entries for the previous week. You are to continue to add information to the same electronic document and resubmit it weekly.

***Instructional Planning and Preparation Form***

Once the intern begins teaching lessons, he/she no longer needs to write in or submit a reflective journal. Instead the Instructional Planning and Preparation Template Form will be required.

As the intern progresses through the internship, the intern will be required to do most of the assessment, planning, and teaching. Once the intern enters the teaching phase of the internship, one lesson plan should be completed each day (a total of five per week) and submitted to the University Supervisor. The Instructional Planning and Preparation Template document outlines the requirements of the lesson plans and the point values. Each lesson plan submitted to the University Supervisor is worth 25 points. All five lesson plans for the next week of instruction should be submitted at one time, every Sunday by 5:00 pm. In other words, the five lessons plans are completed PRIOR to the actual teaching of the lessons. However, the Reflection Section should initially be left blank then completed AFTER the lesson has been conducted. Once this section is completed, the document should be resubmitted the following Sunday by 5:00 pm.

Even though only five lesson plans (one per day) are required by the University, it will be the intern’s responsibility to prepare in advance for EVERY lesson taught. If the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor requires lesson plans, then the intern should present a plan for each lesson he/she will teach. If the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor does not require lesson plans that is fine. In addition, any reports (i.e., progress, initial, mid-term, or final) which are required by the agency/school will also be the intern’s responsibility and left to the discretion of the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor. For lesson plans required by the Field Site Supervisor a different format may be used.

O&M Field Site Supervisor/Mentor

It is the responsibility of the Field Supervisor to act as a professional mentor for the O&M intern, so that the interns can model their teaching and evaluation style to prepare for entrance to the profession. The Field Supervisor will provide the student with ample observation of his or her teaching and evaluation style, and in turn, will observe the intern implementing teaching and evaluation goals and objectives as mutually identified by both the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor and the intern. This initial observation period should be all encompassing with a gradual reduction of the site supervisor’s observation time over the length of the placement. The rule of thumb should be that initially all student taught lessons should be observed by the Field Site Supervisor, and gradually taper off as the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor deems appropriate.

Once the intern gains more responsibilities, feedback should be given regarding how each lesson was taught as well as the ability of the intern to follow the lesson plan, etc. This feedback should be provided to the intern upon the completion of each lesson so the intern can plan appropriately to correct deficiencies. The Field Site Mentor/Supervisor and the intern may find that brief weekly "sit down" meetings are beneficial to discuss progress, identify deficiencies, and plan for correction of those weaker areas for the upcoming week.

Clients assigned to the intern should have clearly defined program goals in terms of both assessment and instructional strategies. With time, the Field Site Supervisor will want to assign new clients to the intern without clearly defined goals and objectives and expect the intern to develop and then propose goals and objectives for the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor’s approval. In addition, any reports (i.e., progress, initial, mid-term, or final) that are required by the agency/school will also be the intern’s responsibility. However, please be advised that the interns are not 100% capable of writing formal reports at this point in their training. They will need some coaching and support to achieve this goal.

It is the primary responsibility of the Field Supervisor to ensure that each intern "attempts" to implement what is written in the client’s rehabilitation/education program or plan as best as can be expected. Unforeseen circumstances may alter a plan for a given day, but these instances should not be the norm. In other words, the intern is expected to plan in advance for his or her teaching experience and be as prepared as possible for the inevitable. The Field Supervisor assumes responsibility for correcting lesson plan deficiencies. Should the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor notice the intern consistently having difficulty writing or implementing the goals of the plan, please feel free to the University supervisor so he or she can intervene.

Communication between the Field Supervisor and the University Supervisor should be consistent and occur weekly, especially in the beginning of the placement. Responsibility for this will be shared between the Field Site Supervisor and University Supervisor. Telephone and e-mail are acceptable forms of communication. With time and progression of the internship, these contacts can be reduced. Should the Field Site Supervisor have any questions about the intern’s progress the Field Site Supervisor has the responsibility to contact the University Supervisor to discuss those concerns.

***Field Site Supervisor Weekly Lesson Observation***

Once the intern begins to conduct assessments and teach lessons, the Field Supervisor will choose **at least one lesson each week** to evaluate using the Field Site Lesson Observation Form. Please note that at the bottom of the form, there is space to identify up to three measurable evidence-based examples of the O&M intern’s teaching practice. The Field Supervisor should cite the specific evidence to help improve instruction for future lessons. The student is then to write a comment in the reflection box regarding the suggestion. This document should be submitted electronically each week by the Field Supervisor to the University Supervisor.

***Midterm and Final Evaluations***

The Field Site Supervisor should complete the O&M Clinical Competency Evaluation Matrix (CCEM) at the mid-point of the internship and during the last week of the internship. A copy of this document should be mailed electronically or through postal mail to the University Supervisor after the evaluation has been *reviewed* with the intern and signed by both the intern and the Field Supervisor.

***ACVREP Clinical Competency Form***

The Field Supervisor should complete the ACVREP Clinical Competency Evaluation Form at the completion of the internship and mail a copy of the document to the University Supervisor. The competencies should be monitored by the Field Supervisor in conjunction with the University Supervisor throughout the internship. Some of these competency areas may have already been attained during the Level II Student Teaching Placement with school-aged children, but the intern should review this list with the Field Supervisor to determine which competencies have and have not been met. **All competency areas on the ACVREP Clinical Competency Form must be MET in order for the intern to apply for certification.** At the end of the internship, the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor and intern must sign the form verifying the intern’s competence in the various areas.

According to ACVREP standards, Field Supervisors MUST maintain professional certification from ACVREP to make the intern eligible for certification. Not maintaining ACVREP certification will invalidate the internship and may jeopardize the intern’s chances of becoming certified. However, circumstances may exist where providing such supervision by a certified O&M specialist would be difficult or unrealistic for an O&M intern. In these circumstances, the University may apply for an exemption to the on-site certified O&M specialist supervision requirement for interns who face such hardships. The Field Supervisor must reveal prior to the internship if they are not certified so the appropriate approval can be sought.

University Supervisor

It is the University Supervisor’s responsibility to oversee and manage the clinical experience and to make sure that the intern responds appropriately to the requirements of the internship site. The University Supervisor will be responsible for contacting both the Field Supervisor and the intern during this time to assess progress. If possible, the University Supervisor will observe the intern during the internship but must at least conduct midterm and final observations. This may be accomplished by an on-site visit to the internship site, or virtually (e.g., Zoom, Teams). At that time the University Supervisor will complete the University Supervisor Observation Form. Each lesson observed will be evaluated using this form. The University Supervisor will meet with the O&M student intern prior to and after each lesson to complete the pre-lesson and post-lesson conference sections of the form. In addition, the O&M intern is required to complete a lesson plan for each client that will be observed during the University Supervisor’s observational visits. Finally, it will be the University Supervisor’s responsibility to assign a grade based upon the intern’s performance. Grade decisions are based on the scores received for the reflective journal, weekly time reports, weekly instruction planning and preparation documents, all Field Supervisor evaluation forms, and the University Supervisor evaluation forms.

**GRADING**

The final grade for the internship will be based on a scale of 100-80% = S, 79% or below = U. If the intern receives a grade of 79% or lower, he/she will fail the internship and will not be given a second opportunity to complete an internship.

**EXTENSION OF PLACEMENT OR REMOVAL FROM PLACEMENT SITE**

The O&M program faculty understands that individuals learn differently and at different rates.  We support students who are experiencing difficulties in clinical placements in a variety of ways, such as: arranging increased observations, developing work-plans with clear expectations for improvement, and providing increased communication between the university and the internship site. Occasionally, a student intern may be removed from an internship site. This request may be initiated by the Field Site Mentor/Supervisor and the Agency/Placement organization, the University Supervisor, or the O&M Student Intern. Cases will be carefully examined on an individual basis to identify and address the source of the concern or issue.  Every effort will be made to develop a work-plan to try to improve the situation at the initial site or with considerations for a second placement. After the issues have been investigated by the University Supervisor and the O&M Student Intern has received due process (if appropriate), the intern may be removed from the site and request a new placement. Removal from an internship site may be a decision for which all invested parties feel is sound and reasonable.  All reassignments require the approval of the administration of the new site. In some cases, performance may necessitate a review of the candidate’s standing in the program.

At this juncture, the University Supervisor may determine that an O&M intern cannot be placed in a second placement due to their inability to fulfill the professional requirements for the O&M internship. Examples of the problems and situations that would justify an unsatisfactory rating include: the intern demonstrates the inability to ensure the safety of his/her clients or the intern exhibits external behavior(s) that are in conflict with the O&M Code of Ethics.If a student intern receives an unsatisfactory rating for the overall practicum, he or she may be removed from the placement and will not be given an additional placement. It is, however, important to clarify that **if a student is not able to complete a satisfactorily placement in two different locations, he or she will not be allowed to retake the Level III Internship Practicum a third time at the University of Pittsburgh.** At this point, the student is eligible to pursue a degree and/or apply to other programs of study, but he or she would be ineligible to apply for certification in O&M through ACVREP.

**COMPENSATION**

Field Site Mentor/Supervisors assigned an intern full- or part-time may receive an honorarium. The honorarium may go directly to the Field Supervisor or if not able to accept the honorarium, it may go to the Field Supervisor’s school or agency. In order to receive an honorarium please complete the information requested on the Contractor Agreement Form (which should be attached to the cover email) and return to the University Supervisor.

### LIABILITY CONCERNS

Interns enrolled in the Level III O&M Internship are covered under the University of Pittsburgh’s liability insurance. Interns are encouraged to make sure they have sufficient automobile liability coverage for transporting clients (if necessary). However, transferring of clients in the intern’s personal automobiles is not preferred. Rather agency vehicles should be used if possible. Malpractice is also a concern given the nature of what and how we teach. Interns are not prepared to accept the responsibility for independently planning and implementing lessons without oversight or guidance for the Field Site Supervisor. On a weekly basis, the Field Site Supervisor and intern should review the programs of all clients assigned to the intern in order to monitor things closely.

### ACCEPTANCE OF O&M INTERNSHIP GUIDELINES

I confirm that I have carefully read the O&M Internship Guidelines and accept the responsibilities and requirements explained in the document.

Dates of Internship: From: until:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:

Signature of O&M Intern

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:

Signature of Field Supervisor

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:

Signature of University Supervisor