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Practicum Guidelines

Master's Degree of Education in
Mentoring



New Generation Pedagogical Research Center
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, PHNOM PENH

Practicum Guidelines

Master of Education in Mentoring

1. OVERVIEW

1.1. General Description

Master Degree candidates who are enrolled at the *New Generation Pedagogical Research Center (NGPRC)* of the National Institute of Education will be expected to fulfill the requirements of a Practicum at the end of their classroom coursework. The Practicum will provide a realistic setting to help candidates put their understanding of Mentoring Principles into real practice. The Practicum will, therefore, provide an ideal opportunity for candidates to reinforce what they have learned during classroom discussions and research. As such, the Practicum will be an essential element of the preparation of each candidate to be an effective mentor when they return to their assigned schools.

1.2 Location:

The Practicum requirement for receiving the *M.Ed in Mentoring* will occur in the New Generation Schools at Preah Sisowath H.S. and Preak Leap H.S. in Phnom Penh. These schools offer some of the most advanced public-school settings in Cambodia and are conveniently located close to the National Institute of Education.

1.3 Duration

The Practicum will last for 3 months at the end of each academic year (12 weeks) during May, June and July.

1.4 Credits

The Practicum will be equivalent to 10 modules in NGPRC syllabus or 10 credits.

1.5 Practicum Content Summary

The credibility of a mentor depends on his or her ability to do the job of a teacher. Therefore, the practicum comprises a small number of teaching demonstrations. A total of two or three demonstrations are anticipated during the required Practicum. In agreement with the supervising instructor from the center and the senior classroom teacher who hosts the practicum, the trainee will plan and implement a lesson using new or unusual techniques that were researched during earlier course work at the center. This demonstration can take the form of co-teaching with the normal teacher or other modalities that are agreed with the trainee, the supervisor, and the host teacher.

To be sure, teaching at a secondary host school will not be the main task of the mentor during the Practicum. The central set of tasks of the practicum will consist of classroom observations. The trainees will observe the lessons of junior teachers at Sisowath H.S. or Preak

Leap H.S. to provide them with feedback and support. Trainees may be expected to work closely with teachers that they mentor in lesson preparation, planning meetings, and other forms of collaboration as recommended during mentoring coursework.

All the lessons observed during the practicum will be filmed as part the new *Observic* platform, which will be a key tool to ensure that the mentoring process is optimal. The trainees conduct themselves the utilization of *Observic*, from the footage to the final report.

To provide them with an enlarged vision of the school system, the trainees will also be requested to perform various tasks related to the school management during the last month of the Practicum. It can include the preparation of special events (e.g. Parent Night Show, teaching workshops), the material and pedagogical preparation of the national exams, administrative duties, or other tasks depending on the needs and schedule of the hosting school. That will demonstrate their flexibility and their leadership skills. Those other tasks will be negotiated between the school principal and the NGPRC faculty, to ensure that they are learning opportunities for the trainees.

2. PRACTICUM OBJECTIVES

The following objectives have been identified as benchmarks to assess the degree to which trainees were able to successfully complete their Practicum coursework:

1. Trainees can prove their teaching abilities, by successfully undertaking classroom demonstrations and co-teaching.
2. Trainees can reflect on their own practice, both verbally and in writing, through various self-assessment tools, including *Observic*.
3. Trainees can conduct effective conferences with assigned teachers, as measured by agreed guidelines, to prepare lessons and provide relevant feedback.
4. Trainees can observe the teacher's skills with benevolence and in a non-threatening manner.
5. Trainees can provide feedback to assigned teachers 'constructively' and in accordance with guidelines discussed during previous coursework.
6. Trainees can write reports for the benefit of the assigned teacher, including a description of the lesson(s) observed and answers to the questions that the teacher might ask.
7. Trainees can effectively use *Observic* for all the main purposes for which it is intended, as these pertain to the needs of the mentee and as mentor. This includes the footage of a video, the submission of the video for review, self-assessment and the full review of someone else's video (exclusive of administrative tasks).

3. IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Detailed Preparations to Complete the Practicum at Sisowath HS

3.1.1 Identifying Assigned Teachers

There is obviously a balance to be found between the learning needs of students, of the high-school teachers who will be mentored, and the development trainees' needs. In order to effectively organize the practicum, the Director of the high schools will provide a list of teacher candidates who are interested in receiving mentoring support from trainees enrolled at the New Generation Pedagogical Research Center.

The teachers who work with mentees will do so voluntarily and do not necessarily need to be 'elite' teachers. Assigned teachers may also be 'beginners' who want to learn new techniques or to get feedback about their current methods of teaching. Nevertheless, they must agree to be observed by a small team of young mentors and be ready to spend time to discuss with NGPRC master's candidates about the preparation for teaching before and after class. Assigned teachers must also provide lesson plans and all necessary material. The assigned teachers should provide their timetables in advance, including planned tests and other special activities, so that the NGPRC can find the best time to observe their classrooms.

Participating in this practicum as an observed teacher should be seen as an opportunity to improve one's teaching skills and better understand the process of mentoring, which is different from 'inspection.' Teachers who are struggling with difficulties or who want to advance in their career should be encouraged to participate.

3.1.2 Team Work

Although trainees are evaluated individually, they will undertake classroom observations in teams. Each team will be comprised of 4 or 5 trainees under the supervision of a Center Instructor or a Mentor who is working at the NGPRC. There will be 6 teams in total comprising 24 or 25 individuals.

During an observation session, trainees must fulfill different roles, including the following:

- Team leader and main reviewer
- Demonstrator or co-teacher, as relevant,
- Technical supporter for *Observic* (taking video footage and editing),
- Deputy reviewer.

Trainees will take turns in fulfilling these roles so that every trainee will have taken on every role at least twice during the practicum.

3.1.3 Team Composition

As the time for the Practicum approaches, the teams will be organized during a general meeting of all NGPRC faculty members at the New Generation Pedagogical Research Center at NIE.

Faculty members will assign trainees to a team according to the following criteria and considerations:

- A review of Core Abilities (e.g., Critical Thinking Skills, Learning Styles, etc.) and academic background (e.g., STEM, Arts, Social Science, Language, etc.),
- The needs of the assigned teachers of the hosting schools in the core subjects
- A review of trainees' personality and leadership capabilities, in order to obtain well-balanced teams.

The teams will remain the same until the end of the practicum. Under exceptional circumstances, team members can be changed by a common decision of the NGPRC manager and mentors. In any case, the staff members overseeing the Practicum will ensure the consistency of the training. Before changing the composition of a team, 2 supervisors can shift their positions temporarily in order to get a better understanding of the circumstances.

Each team can be expected to work with several teachers of the hosting schools. The schedule will be designed to find a good balance between the needs of the hosting schools and the needs of NGPRC trainees.

3.2 Typical Observation Session

The Supervisor (NGPRC Mentor or Instructor) of the trainees will intervene as little as possible as trainees build a relationship with their mentees. Supervisors will provide comments and observations to the trainees at the very end of a session, when everything is wrapped up.

Each week, the Supervisor will designate the main reviewer, who will then be responsible for overseeing the training sessions and regular meetings. The assigned teachers should also join these meetings. The leader of the week will:

- Organize the schedule and the agendas of the meetings
- Facilitate each scheduled conference and animate the discussions
- Distribute roles for the other participants, according to their training needs and skills
- Give assignments to the other members of the team, such as *Observic* reviews or preparation tasks
- Conclude and summarize the debates
- Identify any problems that may have occurred during the week and lead troubleshooting discussions, as needed.
- Write down and sign the meeting report, which should also be co-signed by the Supervisor.

At the end of each week, the Supervisor will organize a short meeting (approximately 1 to 2 hours) with the trainees only (no Sisowath or Preak Leap assigned teachers), to evaluate their work briefly, set new objectives and designate the next team leader. He gives personalized recommendations in writing.

3.3 First Week of the Practicum

The first week of the Practicum will provide exploratory meetings and orientations to trainees to better understand how the Practicum is supposed to unfold. These orientations will include a tour of the school and introductions to relevant staff members at the school. The Supervisor will act as a team leader to demonstrate how assigned tasks are to be completed. He or she implements a “think aloud” strategy in which he comments on his own actions.

3.4 Last month of the practicum

To provide trainees with an enlarged vision of the school system, they will also be requested to perform various tasks related to the school management during the last month of the Practicum. It can include the preparation of special events (e.g. Parent Night Show, teaching workshops), the material and pedagogical preparation of the national exams, administrative duties, or other tasks depending on the needs and schedule of the hosting school. That will demonstrate their flexibility and their leadership skills. Those other tasks will be negotiated between the school principal and the NGPRC faculty, to ensure that they are learning opportunities for the trainees.

3.5 End-of-Practicum Report

At the end of the Practicum, the trainees will write a report about one significant problem that they encountered during the training and propose solutions. The reports should follow a standardized format that will include the following headings:

1. **Section 1:** Identification of the Problem (e.g., Age Differentials Create Challenging Communication)
2. **Section 2:** Discussion of Relevant Research or Documentation
3. **Section 3:** Strategies to Achieve Resolution/Assessment of Effectiveness in Resolving Problems
4. **Section 4:** Conclusion

Trainees will receive a briefing from their Instructors/Supervisors about how to write the report according to this format and provide individual conferencing in order to ensure that the best topic is addressed. Compelling theses will be archived in order to provide good models for future cohorts.

3.6 Assessment of the Practicum

3.6.1 Data Collection Methods

Trainees will be evaluated individually by their Supervisor using a diverse set of assessment tools that include the following:

- Classroom Observations
- Meeting Participation Rating Scales
- Software Utilization Rating Scales
- Individualized Conferencing Assessments

- Quality of Thesis Completion

3.6.2 Ensuring Reliable Assessment

When in serious doubt with an individual case, a supervisor can ask a colleague to assist in order to get a second opinion and ensure that all assessments are reliable. This should be more the exception than the rule in order to avoid an excessive disruption of the training. The first supervisor remains responsible for the grading of the given trainee, unless the Center Manager says otherwise.

The grading process will cover the assessment of activities during the entire length of the Practicum. Practicum assessments will not necessarily be based on an average of unchangeable scores. Nor will it take the form of a final exam. Trainees will be continuously evaluated based on dynamic scoring so that rapid progress at the end of the Practicum will outweigh poorer scores received at the beginning.

A trainee who has validated all the required skills continues to participate to the work of his team until the official end of the practicum. Grades can be revised by the instructor until the end of the practicum.

3.6.3 Assessment Criteria

Trainees will be graded on a diverse set of criteria, which are summarized below:

Teaching skills

- The ability to demonstrate specific techniques convincingly.
- The ability to explain one's choices during the Practicum and their limitations (e.g., relevance, expected benefits, points of attention), so that another teacher can imitate him.

Self-assessment

- The ability to identify one's strengths and use them to one's advantage.
- The ability to be lucid about the difficulties one encounters and how to effectively resolve them.
- The ability to assess the outcomes of one's own lessons in terms of students' achievements and motivation.
- The ability to use *Observic* to do a self-assessment.

Leadership

- The ability to plan effectively the work of other people, giving them all necessary information and instructions.
- The ability to create the conditions for effective and harmonious team work.
- The ability to conduct conferences so that every stakeholder has an opportunity to share his/her opinions and concerns.
- The ability to facilitate conferences so that they have positive & concrete outcomes.

Observation Skills

- The ability to pay attention to the material conditions of the lesson.
- The ability to observe and understand the reactions of students.

- The ability to understand the purpose and the organization of activities.
- The ability to pay attention to the security and well-being of all persons in the classroom and reports any problems in this regard to the Supervisor.
- The ability to respect the authority of the teacher.

Counseling

- The ability to understand the objectives and constraints of assigned teachers.
- The ability to provide relevant and constructive feedback to assigned teachers and colleagues.
- The ability to effectively respond to questions and concerns of the assigned teacher and to take these concerns into account.

3.7 Using *Observic* as a Key Part of the Practicum

The New Generation Pedagogical Research Center seeks to empower trainees with knowledge of cutting-edge developments in 21st Century pedagogies and tools. This includes dynamic software mentoring programs such as *Observic* that will form a key part of the skill set imparted to trainees. NGPRC trainees will need to fully comprehend how the *Observic* platform works in two very different ways. First, they will be observed (as a mentee), as any other teacher might be, using this software. This will help them to better understand the use of the software as a mentee. But they will also be expected to use the software as a mentor for assigned teachers, giving them a very different perspective on the use of the software (as a mentor). These dual experiences will help trainees to gain a strong understanding of how to use this software effectively.