



# Practicum Manual

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## What is a Practicum?

A practicum is an educational opportunity based in “learning by doing.” It allows you to learn through participation in substantial ministry responsibilities. A practicum takes advantage of the unique match of the learning environment (e.g. a church) and the learning objectives (e.g. ministry training). Since all Antioch School students are based in ministry situations, there is ample opportunity for them to learn by doing. In fact, it is often a natural dimension of their participation in church because they view ministry at the core of what it means to be part of a church.

A practicum is not “credit for experience.” It is not simply acknowledgment that lots of previous experience necessarily means that you deserve credit. Many of us haven’t learned very much from most of our past experiences. A practicum is not credit for current experience, as if mere activity is the same as learning. It is not credit for “time on task.”

Credit is given for evidence of learning related to the following four dimensions of Kolb’s Experiential Learning taxonomy:

1. Concrete Experience. What did you do?
2. Reflective Observation. What went well? What was challenging?
3. Abstract Conceptualization. What lessons were learned?
4. Active Experimentation. How can you use those lessons to improve in future experience.

Each Antioch School program includes practicum requirements in order to take advantage of the church-based situation of students. We think that *experiential learning turbocharges education*, but *situated learning turbocharges experiential learning* because the context and the content match!

A practicum is a tangible way for students to maximize the benefit that can be derived from their presence in a real-life ministry context.

We have all heard someone say “it is the teacher who always learns the most, not the students.” In the Antioch School, we believe this so much that we have incorporated “learning by teaching” into each of our programs.

The purpose of a Teaching Practicum is to learn core ideas through teaching. It is not primarily a teacher-training exercise, though it is likely that students will develop as teachers through the experience. Rather, our Teaching Practicum are designed to be learning experiences, placed

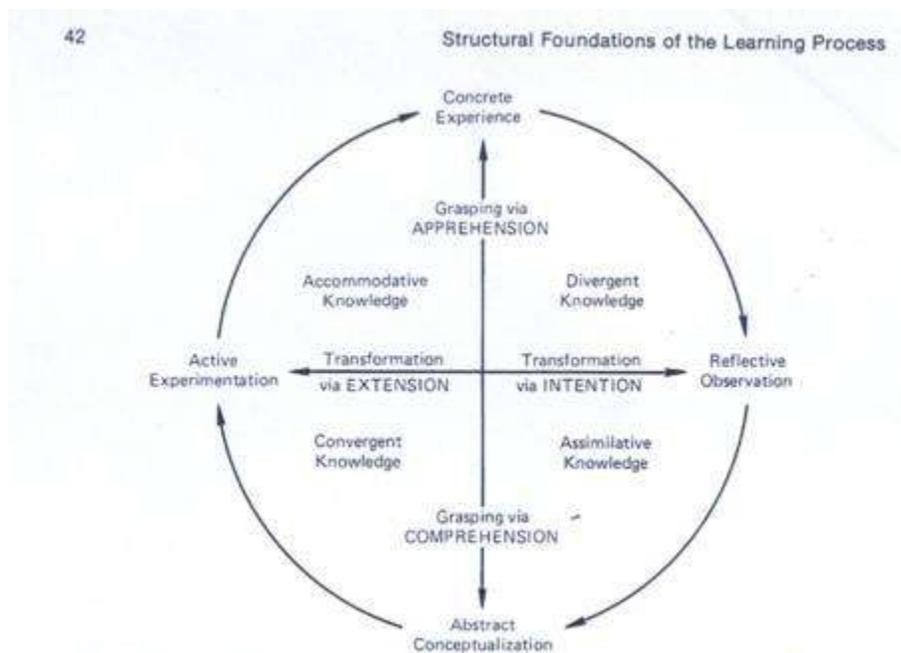
fairly early in the programs of most students, in order to reinforce and deepen one's competencies regarding the basics of the program.

The venue for teaching can be chosen by students in the natural course of their ministries. The Antioch School does not need to be notified in advance of the venue. Further, the venue does not necessarily have to be a formal teaching setting. Teaching Practicum can be done with small groups, family devotions, and one-on-one discipleship. The intensity of the teaching may be different in various venues. For instance, you don't need to insist that everyone read every article and do every project in a Leadership Series course. The intention is that students learn through a process of helping others to learn. Students should focus on helping others understand the big ideas and take steps forward based on those big ideas.

## What is the Academic Legitimacy of “Learning by Doing?”

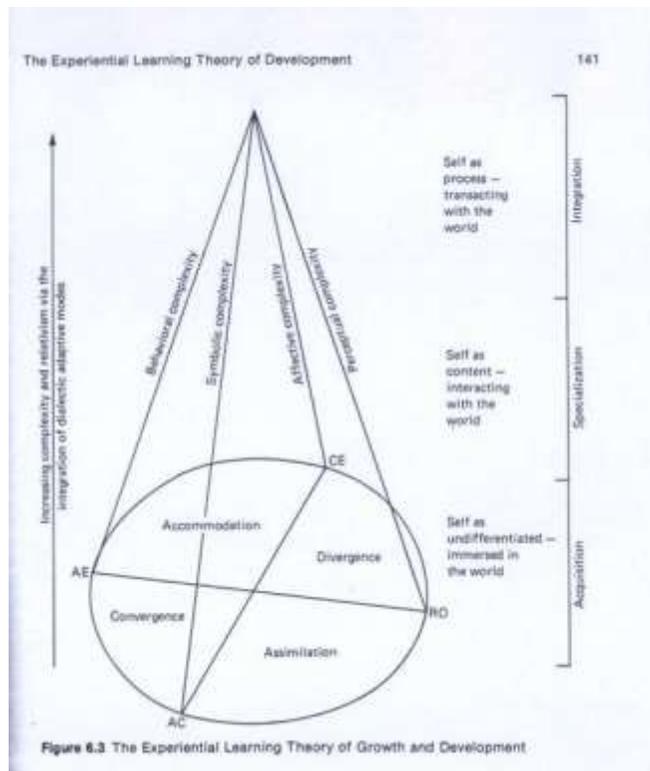
Many people associate academic integrity with traditional courses in classrooms on a campus. Increasingly, academic legitimacy is being recognized as the evidence of “learning,” not just “teaching.”

A foundation of the academic legitimacy of educational practicum is found in the work of a leading scholar named David Kolb. His book, *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984) is a classic in educational research. Kolb’s model is not just about experiential learning, but “the central role that experience plays in the learning process” (p. 20). The essence of the chart below shows the ongoing progression of the cycle of Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation (with the various forms of knowledge created and the intellectual processes through which knowledge is created).



**Figure 3.1** Structural Dimensions Underlying the Process of Experiential Learning and the Resulting Basic Knowledge Forms

Kolb is quite well-known for his work on experiential learning, but less well-known for his work on comprehensive human development. The chart below shows how experiential learning relates to the maturing process as one engages more completely and effectively in one’s world.



Kolb's work focuses on the powerful developmental role of experiential learning. Others have built on Kolb's foundation and focused on the relation of experiential learning with contexts. The most noteworthy contributors are Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, particularly through their book *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (New York: Cambridge, 1991).

Lave and Wenger have popularized the term "situated learning" which essentially means that educators pay attention to the context as well as the content to make sure that they match in a manner to optimize development. A few technical terms help us to understand this concept. "Legitimate peripheral participation" refers to the substantial, yet not fully integrated position of a learner, particularly an apprentice. The learner is recognized to have a legitimate place in the situation, even if it is still somewhere on the periphery (or away from the very core of the context). "Zone of proximal development" refers to the attempt by mentors and students to find the places where optimal development can take place. It often means getting more closely involved than one might think is appropriate, but not too closely involved that it is completely overwhelming. Rather, it is finding the right match between challenge and comfort.

The academic legitimacy of practicum is made particularly clear in the work edited by Barbara Jacoby, *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996). "Service Learning" is the term for learning that is connected to service. Several

years ago, the American Association of Higher Education commissioned a series of nearly 20 books to be written on service learning in the various disciplines of traditional higher education. Two crucial factors stand out in terms of the academic legitimacy of service learning. First, the learning must be planned with academic objectives in mind. Usually there is a learning contract in place that defines the objectives, the experience, supervision, and the assessment process. Second, there is serious reflection on the experience. It is the looking back on what was accomplished in terms of learning that transforms experience into learning that endures (and takes you toward further learning that builds on the experience).

A thorough literature review of experiential learning, situated learning, and service learning was done as part of the dissertation research by Stephen Kemp, Academic Dean of the Antioch School. It is called *Experiential learning and the role of primary social relationships as context for situated learning in distance education courses of evangelical theological education institutions* (Loyola University/Chicago, Ph.D. in Higher Education, 2007). This research concludes that although Christian distance education programs allow students to “study where they are,” the programs focus on the academic learning community (students and faculty in institutional contexts) and don’t take advantage of the incredible potential for students to benefit from their God-given learning communities (family, church, neighborhood, workplace).

In Kemp’s article “Situated Learning: Optimizing Experiential Learning through God-given Learning Community” (in *Christian Education Journal*, Spring 2010, pages 118-123), he makes the case for the biblical priority of primary social relationships as contexts for learning. He also gives practical examples of how families, churches, and neighborhoods can be easily and effectively engaged to help accomplish traditional academic objectives in powerful and enduring ways.

## How do I Earn Credit for Practicum?

The Antioch School has two types of practicum: Ministry Practicum and Teaching Practicum. Both are opportunities to earn credit for “learning from experience,” but with slight differences.

For Ministry Practicum, you need to report the amount of time spent in preparation for, engagement in, and reflection on the experience. The credit value follows the standard formula for academic credit, namely 1 semester hour of credit for each 45 hours of learning activities. You may earn from 1 to 3 credits for each Ministry Practicum, depending on the amount of time spent.

For Teaching Practicum, you don't need to report the amount of time spent because we have already calculated our estimates for how much time it will take to prepare, teach, and reflect on the experience for each Teaching Practicum.

Although both types of Practicum use the same criteria titles (Experience, Observation and Reflection, Conceptualization of Learning, Anticipation of Future Experience), there are slight differences in the explanations of the criteria. For instance, as noted above, a Ministry Practicum Report must include a calculation of time spent in order to meet the Experience criteria, but the Teaching Practicum Report does not.

Both types of Practicum require you to report on what went well and what was challenging in order to meet the Conceptualization of Learning criteria. However, the Teaching Practicum also requires you to report on the impact of what was taught (on yourself, on those who were taught, and/or on those who were impacted by those who were taught).

## How Does It Work?

Ministry Practicum and Teaching Practicum may be done in various ways.

1. Current. The best practicum are the ones for which you focus on learning throughout the experience. If you know that you will be giving a report on the learning associated with an experience, you are much more likely to be alert to the learning potential, to prepare better, and be thinking about lessons to be learned throughout the experience.
2. Retroactive. It is possible to earn credit for previous experience by reporting on the learning associated with the experience using the four assessment criteria. Students are restricted to no more than half of their Ministry Practicum credit coming from retroactive reports.
3. Consecutive. Ideally, you could attach Ministry Practicum to each other. At the end of one Ministry Practicum report is the anticipation of future experience. This naturally leads to actually having that as the concrete experience for your next Ministry Practicum. In essence, this captures the spirit of lifelong learning.
4. Integrated. Great Ministry Practicum are closely connected to lessons learned in Leadership Series courses (especially for B.Min. and M.Min. students) and Paradigm Transformation Projects (especially for D.Min. students). Unit 5 of each Leadership Series course calls for the design of practical ministry tools. A Ministry Practicum is a great way to combine academic credit with actual implementation of your work in Leadership Series courses. Similarly, Ministry Practicum are a great way of putting into practice and/or doing field research related to enhance lessons being learned in Paradigm Transformation Projects.
5. Limited Time. It is best to focus on a limited period of time for a Ministry Practicum. We recommend using a 3-month period. In this manner, you can have a well-contained experience and enough memory of the experience to do good reflection.

## Ministry Practicum Template \*

### EXPERIENCE (What did you do?)

Describe briefly an area of substantial past or current ministry experience for which you would like to make improvements. Describe the experience in terms of what, where, with whom, when, and for how long. Calculate the number of actual hours spent in the experience over a defined period of time (e.g. 45 hours over 3 months).

### REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION (How did it go?)

Describe what went well and what was challenging. Give a paragraph each for a few things that went well and a few things that were challenging.

### ABSTRACT CONCEPTUALIZATION (What lessons did you learn?)

Describe why you think the things above went well. Describe why you faced the challenges above. Give a paragraph of analysis for each thing that went well and each thing that was challenging.

### ACTIVE EXPERIMENTATION (How can you prepare for actual improvement?)

Describe what you would make sure to do the same next time. Describe what you would do differently. Give a paragraph about each thing that you would keep the same and each thing that you would do differently.

\* Note that the report is closely calibrated with the criteria in BILD Cloud. If you make careful use of this template, you are very likely to have your report validated and earn credit.

## Ministry Practicum Example \*

Experience.

My Ministry Practicum Report is related to my ministry as a preacher, specifically as a preacher in Sunday services. It is my responsibility to preach expository sermons on most Sunday mornings. My church is in suburban Chicago. Our congregation is what you might call a traditional North American evangelical group. It is mostly composed of white, upper middle class, professionals and their families. I spend approximately 4½ hours per week in preparation and another ½ hour delivering a sermon. Over a period of 2 months, I spend at least 45 hours in preparation and delivery of sermons. Thus, this Ministry Practicum is worth 1 credit toward my Antioch School degree program.

Observation and Reflection.

My responsibility is not merely to preach sermons that encourage or inspire our congregation. Rather, I am supposed to be teaching them God's Word and helping them to apply its truths in a transformational way in their lives and communities. We don't want preaching to be just a Sunday thing, but rather it is supposed to be something that helps the congregation to follow and obey Christ through the week. I study God's Word diligently. I have confidence that I have mastered the biblical teaching about which I preach. My sermons are well-crafted in terms of structure and progression of thought. And my applications are carefully designed for the real life situations of our congregation. Yet, I'm not convinced that I am very successful. My sermons do seem to be just a Sunday thing.

Specifically, when I talk to people about previous sermons, they don't seem to know very much about the portions of God's Word from which I preached. In fact, some of them don't even seem to know what portions I've "taught" them. Further, it seems that most of them have not followed through with the significance of the teaching in terms of application and transformation in their lives and communities. When I ask them about the content and impact of my sermons, I tend to get blank looks, vague responses, and they try to change the subject.

When I ask people to tell me about the things in our church that are having transformational impact on them, they tell me about things that have happened in their small groups or in relationships with others in our church. Rarely, do they make reference to my sermons. As I reflected on this reality, it made me recognize just how one-sided and non-relational my sermons are. My preaching is all one-way communication. I try to tell what people are thinking and how they are reacting by the looks on their faces, but I'm not confident that I am really able to tell. Even when I greet them after a service and they say "Thanks pastor for another good sermon," rarely do they say anything specific or unique to that particular sermon. I also notice

that there is a lot more energy in the hallway before and after the church service as people interact with each other, but when I preach, people are still and not very energetic.

It makes me wonder what I can do to improve the effectiveness of my sermons in terms of actually teaching God's Word and helping it to have its intended impact on the congregation.

#### Conceptualization of Learning.

As I reflected on the challenges regarding the effectiveness of my preaching, it made me wonder if there were things I could do to bring a more community-oriented experience to my sermons. Our people care deeply about each other and nearly everyone says that they want to learn God's Word and be transformed by it.

I need to consider ways to bring my sermons into their other conversations and relationships. I need to consider ways to bring their conversations and relationships into my sermons. I need to find ways to help them engage more deeply with me in conversation about the sermons. Additionally, I need to tie my sermons more intentionally with some of the discipleship and leadership development programs that are also part of our church. Right now, my sermons are really more like a separate track of isolated weekly activities rather than steps in a developmental pathway.

#### Anticipation of Future Experience.

For the next 9 weeks, I am going to experiment with my preaching. On Wednesdays, I am going to send out an email to the entire congregation that gives them a brief introduction to the upcoming sermon. It will include a few brief questions that I will ask them to ask at least one other person in our congregation before I preach on Sunday. It could be done with someone at home. They could interact by phone, text, or other social media.

We will also resend the email early on Sunday mornings and encourage them to ask the questions to someone in the hallway before the Sunday service. We will have the questions on posters on the wall and on the screen before the service. On the first few Sundays of the experiment, I may even give a few minutes at the start of the church service for them to talk about the questions. I'm not sure if this is a good idea because it may encourage some to wait until Sunday morning to talk about them.

At the beginning of each sermon for 9 weeks, I am going to have a conversation on the platform with 2 or 3 members of the congregation (or I may wander into the congregation if they seem scared of going up on the platform). I will have them share their answers to the questions, but also talk a little about their feelings related to the exercise. I expect that many of them will find it odd and may not necessarily see its value. As I talk to them, I will explain to them (and the congregation) what I'm trying to do.

The bulk of my sermon will probably not be very different than they were before. However, when I get to the end of my sermon, I will give them another set of questions that build on the earlier questions and drive them into the implications of my sermon. Specifically, they will be related to transformation in their lives and impact in their communities. When possible, I will try to connect it with some of the curriculum that we are using for discipleship and leadership development. We will put these questions on the screen, put them on posters in the hallway, and send them by email immediately after the sermon.

My hope is that this experience will become the base for my next Ministry Practicum Report as I describe what actually happened, reflect on its successes and challenges, and consider what lessons I need to learn in order to be even more effective.

## Teaching Practicum Template \*

### EXPERIENCE (What did you do?)

Describe briefly the experience in terms of what, where, with whom, when, and for how long. You do not need to calculate the number of actual hours spent in the experience over a defined period of time, but you should give a sense of the duration of the teaching experience (e.g. weekly for 3 hours for 6 months).

### REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION (How did it go?)

Describe what went well, what was challenging, and what was the impact of the teaching (on you, on those who were taught, and/or on those impacted by those who were taught). Give a paragraph each for a few things that went well, a few things that were challenging, and a few areas of impact.

### ABSTRACT CONCEPTUALIZATION (What lessons did you learn?)

Describe why you think the things above went well. Describe why you faced the challenges above. Describe why you think it had the impact it did. Give a paragraph of analysis for each thing that went well, each thing that was challenging, and each area of impact.

### ACTIVE EXPERIMENTATION (How can you prepare for actual improvement?)

Describe what you would make sure to do the same next time. Describe what you would do differently. Give a paragraph about each thing that you would keep the same and each thing that you would do differently.

\* Note that the report is closely calibrated with the criteria in BILD Cloud. If you make careful use of this template, you are very likely to have your report validated and earn credit.

## Teaching Practicum Example \*

### Experience.

I taught First Principles Series I and II to a group that included new believers, older believers who had not gone through this type of discipleship experience, a Chinese couple that is considering Christianity, and a few emerging house church leader couples. We met on Sunday afternoons at the homes of the key leaders in our house church cluster for about an hour each week for nearly two years. Participants came from both of the house churches in our cluster.

### Observation and Reflection.

Overall, we had a fairly good experience. Most of the people who started the process finished it. However, one in particular was not able to make it often due to frequent other activities out-of-town on weekends, so she dropped out. It made me wonder how we could help her get the training she still needs. We tried to do it on an individualized basis, but that has also been a struggle.

Perhaps the most significant enduring impact was on the husband of the Chinese couple in graduate school. During the Series II book on LifeWork, he came to recognize how much his worldview was centered on his academic study and career. For his Apply the Principles work, he made a chart that showed concentric circles for how he was currently living his life and another set of concentric circles that showed a more proper alignment of the various aspects of his life. He claimed that it was very hard to him to see his need because of his cultural background. However, as a new father, he recognized that he needed to be much more than a scholar. He needed to be a good husband, father, and even make a bigger priority for his participation with our church. Last Sunday evening, with an unfinished draft of his dissertation due on Monday morning, he still prioritized our house church gathering. It wasn't that he was blowing off his dissertation, but that he knew that presence with the church family would give him the encouragement he needed to make the final adjustments and complete the draft of his dissertation. Even as he talks about the various post-doctoral jobs for which he is applying, he is talking about wanting to stay in our town to be with his church family (and how he hopes he will find another good church family if he takes a job somewhere else).

### Conceptualization of Learning.

During this teaching experience, I grew in my commitment to the value of having people do their work in the "Study the Scripture" section, particularly writing their summaries of the teaching of the passage. In our group, we had people take various approaches. Some gave very concise statements of the teaching.

Others gave summaries that were paraphrases of the passages and were sometimes longer than the passage itself. However, the best work was done by the Chinese couple that is considering Christianity. They didn't have much evangelical Christian baggage. But as graduate students at Iowa State University, they didn't shrink back from reading a passage and stating what they thought it communicated. They consistently found what was actually in the passage rather than write something that they were bringing from their background rather than the text itself. Thus, I improved my skills of teaching by dialing up my emphasis on everyone doing truly fresh work on the passages. By leveraging their example, I was able to help most of the people in the group to do better work, learn more, and be a more effective teacher myself.

I also learned something that I didn't expect to learn. As we worked on the kerygma in Book 1 Session 1, I found myself thinking seriously and freshly about how I tend to think about Jesus. At various times, I focus on him as a Savior, teacher, friend, advocate to the Father, etc. However, I rarely thought of him as the "judge of the living and the dead." I grew up in a fundamentalist context that focused much on God the Father as a judge of unbelievers, but also on believers who lived "worldly" lifestyles. Perhaps I was reacting to this early emphasis in my life by not focusing much on it as an adult. Yet, there is was, plain and simple. Jesus was the "judge of the living and the dead." Even though I have taken systematic theology courses on Christology and thought I "knew" Christ very well, my basic understanding of Christ was made much more accurate and in line with the apostolic emphasis through this teaching experience.

Anticipation of Future Experience.

In the future when I begin teaching the First Principles, I will make sure to emphasize everyone doing their own work on the Study the Scriptures section. I've told other people to do so, but I've sometimes been slack about doing so myself. Given the experience of seeing someone who may not even yet be a true Christian doing such good work in summarizing the passage, I am convinced that everyone can be expected to do so.

Similarly, if I am teaching a group of people who have been believers for some time, I will emphasize that they probably have compartmentalized their view of Christ. Going back to Scripture to build a description of Christ may seem unnecessary to them because "they have been in church for their whole lives." However, it was valuable for me to do so and "I was in church my whole life" and even went to Bible college and seminary. I think I will be able to make a much more compelling case for them to take seriously even Session 1 of Book 1.





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