

GUIDELINES FOR SW 594 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

This two-semester sequence is designed to provide students with a supervised, “hands-on” research experience with a faculty member. The student’s project may involve student- or faculty-initiated research (e.g., work on a new or ongoing project such as funded research). The primary objective of the research practicum is to strengthen students’ ability to synthesize different phases and components of social work research. The key, therefore, is for students to be involved in as many aspects of the research project as possible (e.g., articulation of research questions, literature review, selection of sampling techniques, formulation of design strategies, development of instruments and other methods of data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, and research report writing).

Specific objectives for the individual research project will reflect the individualized nature of student research interests, knowledge, and skills. In conjunction with their supervising faculty member, students are expected to develop a learning contract for the project with the faculty member with whom they are working. The contract should include:

1. The research objectives and competencies to be acquired or strengthened by the student.
2. The research problem being examined.
3. The general methodological procedures to be employed.
4. The specific research tasks/activities to be engaged in by the student over the course of two semesters with an appropriate timeline.
5. The research training to be provided by the faculty supervisor.

Ideally, a publishable paper, co-authored by the student and faculty supervisor, will emerge from the research practicum. At a minimum, the student is expected to submit a formal written summary integrating the substantive, methodological, and data analytic components of the practicum at the end of each semester of the practicum. The faculty supervisor evaluates the student’s performance based upon the completion of the tasks specified in the contract, the student’s attainment of targeted knowledge and skills, and the quality of the final research report.

If the student initiates a project involving human subjects for the purposes of a research practicum, written permission must be received from any agency or individuals/clients that will be involved in the research. The student is responsible for getting University approval for using human subjects prior to making any contacts with individuals/clients for the purposes of research. The website for UIUC Institutional Review Board, which handles human subjects requests and issues is: <http://irb.illinois.edu/>. All forms, contact phone numbers, and committee deadlines are available on this website. Copies of permission letters, along with Human Subject forms, must be filed with the Ph.D. Program Office.

