
FIELD STUDY TIPS FOR SITE SUPERVISORS

Thank you for providing field study positions for our program!

The goal of the field study program is to provide our students with practical experience that builds on their coursework. It not only provides them with real-world, documented skills and abilities, it also gives our students a valuable opportunity to explore whether their chosen specialty within information science is a strong fit for their interests and personality.

I coordinate our Field Study program and am continually impressed with our students! They are bright, forward-thinking, and engaged. In previous library jobs, I created MLIS internship programs in academic libraries. So, I appreciate being able to interact with others who are providing real-world opportunities for our students. It's a rewarding experience to help new information professionals grow.

There are two sections below that provide broad advice, as well as specifics on our program's process and rules. I'm also attaching 4 files to my email:

1. a blank field study Contract & Plan PDF (see info below in "Process" section)
2. a sample Contract & Plan PDF
3. an FAQ that students find useful
4. a Guide to a Successful Field Study – gives you an idea of the types of questions and issues students grapple with when locating, securing, and beginning their field study.

ADVICE:

1. Students are eager to get started on their field study, but often feel overwhelmed as they begin their work. Having a plan in place for training, shadowing, and skill-building is a good idea. Even if a student doesn't require much training, such a plan can help them understand that 1) it's acceptable to ask questions and 2) they aren't expected to know everything.

2. In the Field Study class I teach (LBSC 707), which they take in conjunction with their field study, they submit several reflections. Some of the stressors mentioned include not feeling comfortable talking with

their supervisor and not having a regularly scheduled supervisor meeting. So, I'd encourage you to build that into your plan. Students are so worried about making a good impression in their field of interest that they sometimes feel they are bothering their supervisor if they ask a question outside of a scheduled meeting.

3. Students can always benefit from mentoring and broad career guidance. Some supervisors proactively talk with our students about topics beyond their assigned duties, such as trends in the field, advice on job searches, how to network, etc.

4. Finally, many of the students realize this is a chance to spend valuable time with real-world professionals, but are intimidated or shy. So, encouraging them to interact with others on-site, even if it's just for a coffee break or sharing of weekend plans, is great. Many students mention that these informal interactions make them feel welcome and part of the team. It may seem like a small thing, but they are hesitant to strike up conversations on-site with employees they don't know. They feel, again, that they are bothering people who are trying to work.

PROCESS & RULES:

1. There is a Contract & Plan PDF that a field study supervisor and student should complete together. A blank copy and a pre-filled sample are attached to my email so you can see the level of detail that should be included. Here's the paperwork process:

- a) You and your student(s) should complete the file and sign/date it.
- b) The student then sends the PDF to me for review.
- c) If I approve it, I'll sign/date it and then return it to the student.
- d) That is considered the final version and the student will share it with you.

2. As noted on page 1, the goal of the field study program is to give students hands-on experience that builds on their coursework. So, special projects that need support or that can be done solely by a student are good, as is experience helping provide key services, such as user assistance. (If you want to have me review some preliminary ideas for field study plans, I am happy to do so. I can also provide a few examples of past field studies relevant to your type of organization.)

3. There are a few rules that I should mention:

- a) The student must complete a minimum of 120 hours (on-site, hybrid, or fully remote) during the same time period as the class. Some students may start early but everyone must finish their hours by the end of classes.

- b) A field study must be completed in an information organization under the supervision of an information professional.
- c) A field study experience cannot be completed in the same unit in which a student is currently or was formerly employed. A field study in a different unit within the same organization, however, may be considered as an appropriate site.
- d) The direct supervisor at the field study institution cannot be someone that the student works for now or has worked for previously.
- e) As the course instructor, I will make the decision regarding the appropriateness of a field study placement.
- f) The Contract & Plan file must be submitted and approved by me before the student begins their hours.