

Reflective Academic Essay

Core Requirement for the Practicum Milestone

Deadline: End of August. Practicum Coordinator will announce the exact deadline.

Milestone designation: Complete / Incomplete

Purpose of the Essay

This reflective academic essay asks you to critically examine your practicum experience by connecting what you did, what you observed, and what you learned to concepts, theories, and approaches from the ISS program.

This essay goes beyond merely describing what you did; it explores and examines the theoretical and practical implications of your experience. You are expected to analyze your experience, question assumptions, and demonstrate how theory helps you understand practice. Remember, there is no such thing as practice without theory; it is a myth.

Format of the Essay

1. Title Page

- Student's name
- Organization's name
- Practicum Supervisor's name

2. Body of the Essay

Your essay should be written as a coherent academic paper. Do not use the section headings below as subheadings. Instead, integrate these components throughout your writing.

While this is a reflective essay, maintain an academic tone. You may refer to your experiences and perspectives, but focus on analysis and insight.

Maintain confidentiality. Do not include identifying details about clients or sensitive situations.

A. Organizational Structure and Mandate

- a. Provide a brief overview of the organization or program where you completed your practicum.
- b. Identify the key policies or programs that shape how the organization operates, including both internal and external frameworks.
- c. Explain how these policies are put into practice. How do they become standards, procedures, or services?
- d. Describe the organization's main activities. What does it do, and how did your role contribute to its work or mandate?

- e. What are the main strengths and challenges in how the organization delivers its services? You may consider areas such as direct service, policy work, research, or community engagement.
- f. What underlying assumptions appear to guide the organization's service delivery?

B. Analysis of Your Experience

- a. How did your social location influence your engagement with the organization and the population it serves?
- b. What learning processes did you engage in during your practicum (for example, observation, practice, feedback, or reflection)?
- c. What could have improved or strengthened your learning experience as someone preparing to work in the immigration field?

C. Integrating Theory and Practice

- a. What theories or concepts help explain the organization's mandate and approach to service delivery? These may not be explicitly stated, so draw on your analysis.
- b. What theories or frameworks help explain the day-to-day practices you observed or participated in? If your practicum was research-based, include relevant methodologies or theoretical approaches.
- c. How were these theories applied in practice? Provide examples and note any gaps between theory and actual practice.

D. Professional Development and Personal Insights

Reflect on your development as an emerging professional. In this section, you may use a personal narrative.

- How did your practicum challenge or change your assumptions about newcomers and the immigration and settlement sector?
- Reflect on when you felt uncertain or uncomfortable. How did you handle it, and what did you learn from that experience?
- What would have strengthened your learning experience?
- Did you face any organizational challenges? Give suggestions for improving organizational practices (if relevant to your experience)
- What advice would you give to future students entering the practicum stream?

3. Bibliography

Include:

- Institutional sources (publicly available information)
- Government sources
- Academic sources

Use of AI

If you use AI, you need to be transparent and disclose what you use it for and how you use it.

Please review the accepted academic conduct practices for using AI.

You must keep dated copies of your document drafts and save the conversation you had with the platforms, should there be any suspicion of academic misconduct.

Please use the following AI declaration

The platform you used [*ChatGPT, Gemini, Grammarly*] for which task [*help you find sources, to ensure APA is properly used*] and the task you did not use AI for.

For example,

I used ChatGPT to gather general information about the organization (or program) where I completed my practicum. I used Gemini to ensure I was using APA correctly. I also used Grammarly to review my grammar (not the AI component). I did not use any AI platform to analyze or write my draft or final paper. I reviewed the literature and grey sources to ensure there were no hallucinations in the content and that the bibliographic references were accurate (i.e., that they were actual references).

Formatting Requirements

- Times New Roman, 12-point font
- Double-spaced
- APA format
- Final word count 3,500 - 4000 words