

## **Indiana University School of Social Work**

### **Process for International Field Practicum**

#### **Program Information**

Indiana University School of Social Work provides MSW students with opportunities to complete concentration practicum abroad. International practica develop students' cultural competency and experiences that will assist students in working abroad, as well as working with immigrants and refugees in the United States in many settings. It is the intent of Indiana University School of Social Work that students experience personal and professional growth that will likely increase their knowledge of international relations, and concern for different cultures. Past students who did concentration placements abroad, reported that they made a group of friends outside of the United States of America.

#### **Basic Description of the Program**

Indiana University School of Social Work (IUSSW) requires two different professional internship placements for completion of the MSW Degree. Since 1979 the School has made available the option for approximately 1-5 students annually to complete their second (termed Concentration level) placement in various international settings which meet IUSSW standards for placements. These include the following:

- London, England Borough Social Service Authorities – Hounslow and Ealing; more recently Southwark
- London, England South London and Maudsley Health Trust Maudsley Hospital—Autism and Asperger's Spectrum Service for children and youth
- Cardiff, Wales Social Services – Harvey Jones Adolescent Unit (inpatient psychiatry) and St. David's Hospital Family Therapy Clinic; other sites are possible
- University of Hull, England – Family Assessment and Support Unit (FASU) in Kingston Upon Hull, England
- Universidad Nacional De Lanus, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- US Air Force at Ramstein, Germany
- Bloemfontain, South Africa - The University of the Orange Free State, --Social Work Program— placement has significant community development component
- Mexico - University of Hildago, Mexico
- Kildare, Ireland— Community mental health center placement
- Bangalore, India - National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS)

- Perth, Australia - Human Rights Education at Curtin University
- Eldoret, Kenya - Ampath Centre at Moi University
- Negril, Jamaica – The Theodora Project

The required concentration placement occurs usually in the spring semester. Placements are individually developed and may include sites not listed above. Students register for IUSSW courses S651-52 (4 and 5 credits, respectively) for a total of nine graduate credits. Students are in the international placement 4 or 5 days per week for a total of 16 or 20 weeks. It is often an advantage to stay 20 weeks instead of 16 due to the time often needed for the student's life and cultural adjustments. The receiving practicum site personnel usually assist in arranging housing for the student.

We ask the agency/university to sign our attached affiliation agreement. IUSSW carries a student malpractice insurance policy through the National Association of Social Workers which includes students in international placements.

### **Program Rationale**

This program offers IUSSW students in the MSW program, who are overwhelmingly from the State of Indiana and who will likely practice in Indiana, the opportunity to live in and develop practice skills in the context of another social welfare system and culture. Through immersion in another culture and social services delivery system, students can critically examine the social welfare organizational structures in operation in Indiana and the United States, understand the importance of history and culture in the development of social welfare systems, and compare and contrast structures and programs. This experience provides students with the opportunity to explore and to challenge their own cultural egocentrism. We seek to develop placements that will support social work services to Indiana's growing Latina population. We have sought to broaden the overall outcomes of sending students abroad by requiring them to make at least one professional presentation of their experiences and learning to either a policy or practice class at IUSSW or a staff development presentation to a social or health services organization on their return.

### **Application Information**

#### **Eligibility and Pre-requisites**

*Students must meet the following criteria:*

- Be in the second year concentration of the MSW Program
- Be in good standing in the School
- Minimum 3.25 cumulative GPA
- Have received an overall rating of "Superior or Commendable" and a Satisfactory (S) grade in S555 Intermediate Practicum I
- Develop a plan with the MSW Field Coordinator and Advisor for meeting all required courses
- Submit a petition for an international placement using guidelines attached to the MSW Field Coordinator with copies to the student's Academic Advisor and Field Coordinator, Akanke Omorayo

- Be willing to sign Indiana University's Agreement for International Study (see attached for most recent version).

### **Preparation Process**

International placements are completed during a Block Practicum in the Spring semester of student's concentration year and collaborates with other universities, and/or with a non-government organization (NGO).

To begin the process, student will make an appointment to meet with Field Instructor for International placements to explore the possibility of concentration placements abroad.

After student identifies a county and placement site, she/he must need to submit a practicum petition, six months in advance, requesting to complete an international practicum placement overseas. Student will submit supporting documents along with the petition. Field Coordinator will review the entire application and explore appropriate placement possibilities. Together with Field Coordinator, once a site has been identified, student will explore the availability of an on-site field instructor. In some cases, students may find off-site field instructors. Most importantly, the field instructor must hold an MSW and two years post experience. In any case, students are encouraged to ask about the potential for required payment from the site for supervision before finalizing the site. It is our experience that some overseas agencies expect the student to pay a fee for supervision.

### **Academic**

The IUSSW International Placement Faculty member determines through telephone conferences, exchange of printed information, e-mail or fax communications whether a prospective international placement meets the School's standards and whether an appropriately credentialed staff member is available and willing to serve as the field instructor. (Most of our agency-based field instructors also provide instruction for social work students in their home country for local social work education programs.)

Typically students complete an international practicum during a 4-5 month period (block placements). It involves students working fulltime at an agency with their main focus being on developing professional skills through practicum work at the agency. Although students may leave some time for traveling and sightseeing, they are encouraged to keep in mind their commitment to focus on learning through work abroad, rather than a vacation abroad.

At the host country/agency students complete the requirements for S651-6562 Social Work Practicum II and III, for 4 and 5 credits, respectively. These are professional practice courses. The course syllabi are contained in the MSW Student Handbook which is sent to the receiving organization and field instructor. Students are required to meet weekly for a minimum of one hour with their on-site field instructor for educational supervision/tutoring. The on-site field instructor and student prepare a written educational learning plan, a midpoint evaluation, and a final evaluation using the protocols in the School's MSW Student Hand Book.

The grading process in international placements is the same for all placements; the on-site field instructor recommends a grade to the faculty field liaison who has responsibility for assigning a grade of Satisfactory or Fail.

The IUSSW faculty liaison maintains contact with the student and field instructor through review of a submitted learning plan, midpoint evaluation telephone conference, and final evaluation telephone conference. Other contact is maintained by fax and e-mail, if available. At times, the faculty field liaison may make an on-site visit.

### **Pre-departure Orientation**

Several activities occur for pre-departure and on-site orientations. These include:

1. Student and Field Coordinator for International placements (Akanke Omorayo) identify relevant cultural and historical information about the county and social welfare system; 1-2 sessions to review this material
2. Review and completion of the materials needed by the Office of International Studies including Study Abroad Agreement, health insurance, and various other health and contact information forms.
3. Visit to campus Office of International Studies to provide them with copies of the materials and obtain any new "student aboard" information available.
4. Discussion of anticipated costs and a budget for the experience, money management system abroad, housing while abroad, travel arrangements, passport and visas needed.
5. At least one telephone conference is held with the Field Coordinator, the student, and the receiving field instructor in the social services agency (or university social work program) prior to departure to learn what arrangements have been made for the student's housing and to discuss mutual concerns, and the student's questions.
6. An informal meeting between graduates who recently completed an international placement and the prospective international students is usually arranged.
7. Discussion of field course requirements, how and how often student is to communicate with faculty field liaison; required assignments, etc
8. Discussion of how student usually approaches new situations and how that pattern can be helpful, unhelpful in a study abroad situation; discussion of the student's goals, apprehensions and anticipation.

Once the student is on-site, the agency-based field instructor (who is given the complimentary title of instructor at Indiana University School of Social Work) is responsible for arranging an appropriate orientation to the placement setting which includes the following:

1. Physical aspects of the agency; service purposes, program and goals, administrative, organizational policies and procedures including safety and risk management; and historical development of the organization;
2. Opportunities to meet staff in order to understand their professional roles and relationships within the organization;
3. Observations of client service within the organization; accompanying and/or "shadowing" professional staff;
4. Information about the client populations served by the agency;
5. Orientation to the role of the professional and student in the organization, including normative behavior in relation to dress, safety procedures, and professional relationships;
6. Orientation to the range of value and ethical issues frequently encountered in professional practice in the organization.

**Student Budget**

Since costs vary widely according to practicum site, the student budget is worked out on an individual basis with estimates shaped by current air fares, cost of living in the host country, recent student experience in similar accommodations in the same location and fluctuations in the currency exchange rates. The Office of Student Financial Aid works with students who qualify for financial aid loans to incorporate the international budget into the financial aid package and the IUSSW International Placement faculty member.

**Program Support**

The Wallace International Scholarship is available to students and provides modest amounts. Students may apply by requesting a form from the International Placement Faculty member. Faculty serving as faculty liaison may submit grant requests to the Indiana University International Conference Attendance and made a professional presentation during the on-site visit. International Development funds are also available to faculty.

# International Placement Student Information Session

*You may want to address these questions:*

1. Am I a suitable candidate to do an international placement?
2. Why do I want to complete an international placement?
3. How will this help to me in achieving my future career goals in social work?
4. How will I finance my experience - *can I afford to go?*
5. What might be the challenges for me in doing an international placement?
6. Can I deal with “different” things such as living conditions, sanitary conditions, food, etc.?

Ask yourself:

Am I:

1. open to change and adventure?
2. open to new challenges?
3. open minded and curious?
4. able to embrace and respect differences?
5. able to live with ambiguity, uncertainty and frustration?
6. able to be non-judgmental?
7. able to be independent, self-reliant and self-directed in my learning?
8. able to take the initiative in new situations?
9. able to deal with stressful situations?
10. flexible and adaptable?
11. able to deal with the unknown?
12. able to take risks?
13. really ready for this type of experience?