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**Northern Lights College  
Early Childhood Education  
and Care Program (ECEC)**

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B.C.'s Energy College™

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**PRACTICUM III  
Sponsor /Mentor Guide**

Revised February 2017

## NLC PRACTICUM III HANDBOOK

This handbook has been developed to help Sponsor Educators understand Northern Lights College's team approach to providing valuable practicum experiences for student Early Childhood Educators. We believe that the practicum should benefit all of those involved. With this handbook, we hope to answer some of the questions that naturally arise.

Please keep this handbook accessible and refer back to it when needed.

## DEFINITIONS AND ROLES

### ***NLC Requirements for Practica Placements***

- A Licensed Early Childhood Education and Care centre
- The Sponsor Educator has a Current ECE License
- The Sponsor Educator must be able to work directly with the student
- At least eight children 30 months to school age are in attendance on a regular basis
- If students are completing a practicum within their workplace, a Work place agreement has been completed with copies for the student, Sponsor And NLC Instructor
- A work place experience form (WEA) has been completed with copies for the student, Sponsor and HDEC office
- A flexible program and staff support to allow students to practice what they are learning in their courses within the philosophy of the centre

Any exceptions are discussed with the Northern Lights College Practicum Instructor (Practicum Instructor).

### ***Sponsor Educator***

The Sponsor Educator has the most contact with the student and serves in a mentoring role.

### **Some Considerations:**

- The Placement Centre should be functioning well to support a positive practicum experience for all (for example - It is difficult to extend support to a student if there are staff, program, or financial upheavals...).
- Students look to Sponsor Educators and Placement Staff to share knowledge and resources.

- Students will require time to discuss her/his progress with the Sponsor Educator and the Practicum Instructor. Since each sponsor has their own style, it is important to communicate to the student your preference, e.g. would you like to meet at set times each week, every morning as you set up, on the fly, would you like the student to initiate discussion, or would you like to. Simply be up front about what works best for you.
- Students are encouraged to wonder, to ask questions, and try out what they are learning in ECE courses! They will have assignments to complete that require collaboration, support and flexibility on the part of the program, staff and parents.

## **Mentoring:**

- Students should be directly supervised during all practicum hours by the Sponsor Educator and/or a designated senior staff person.
- The Sponsor Educator models and mentors for the student; therefore, attitudes towards colleagues and parents of the children are respectful, so that the student gains an understanding of professional behaviour.
- The Sponsor Educator makes efforts to understand the developmental level of the student, so that responsibilities can be matched to the student's abilities. (Responsibilities increase with time.) Practicum Instructors can also help in this area.
- The Sponsor Educator gives clear directions about what is expected of the student and encourages the student to feel like part of the teaching team.
- The Sponsor Educator supports students' experiences/practice that will reinforce their classroom learning.
- Sponsor Educators understand that students make mistakes. Much is learned from our mistakes! (Intervene only if the student is getting into a potentially dangerous situation due to inexperience.)

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## ***Practicum Instructor***

The Northern Lights College Early Childhood Education and Care (NLC ECEC) Practicum Instructor organizes the practicum experience with the student and the Sponsor Educator. The role of the Practicum Instructor includes supporting the student in setting up the practicum experience, supporting the Sponsor Educator in her/his role and facilitating communication between all parties involved in the practicum. The Practicum Instructor encourages the student's personal growth, and gives feedback on course requirements and assignments. The Instructor assesses the student's completion of course requirements and assignments as they are completed, as well as the final assessment for the final grade.

## ***Work Place Practica – Special Considerations***

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The following is to be considered for an "at work practicum".

- An "at work practicum" must be approved by the Practicum Instructor first.
- The Sponsor Educator must be able to work directly with the student.
- Participants are asked to explore and be aware of possible effects on working relationships. This can be a very positive area to expand upon during this time.
- Practicum will add additional workload to the other staff members who are involved in the practicum.
- The student and Sponsor Educator must feel that objectivity is possible.
- The student must be able to attend to practicum needs and requirements while working.
- The role of the staff member will supersede that of a student.
- The goals and reflection for the practicum must include attention to the work relationship.
- The Work Experience Agreement form must still be filled out and submitted to the HDEC office prior to beginning the placement. Practicum Days must be clearly designated as per the Practicum Proposal and WEA with regards to Worker's Compensation coverage. The Practicum Instructor must be informed by D2L email of any changes to attendance dates and times. A revised form must be completed if hours are extended beyond the finish date recorded in the WEA.
- Students and Sponsor Educators should consider whether a potential conflict exists if the student's child is receiving care at the same time the student is completing a practicum (whether as an employee or not).

### **GENERAL PRACTICUM GUIDELINES**

The following guidelines have been prepared to facilitate and clarify the working situation between students of Northern Lights College and Sponsor Educators during practicum placement.

Sponsor Educators are valued for the way that they are helpful to students by their use of personal encouragement and constructive feedback. This is usually accomplished through brief, frequent conferences with the student.

#### ***1. Placement Attendance:***

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Signed Attendance Sheets are kept for the duration of the practicum period. The student is responsible for filling out the Attendance Sheets with the dates and times, and the Sponsor Educator signs/initials the practicum hours. It works **best when** the sheet is **signed daily**, as it is hard to remember exact hours after some time has elapsed.

**Note: Students must keep copies of their attendance records to be submitted with their convocation application as proof of practica hours toward graduation.**

## **2. Scheduling Placement Attendance:**

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It's important that Sponsor Educators and students discuss and come to an agreement on a working schedule that is compatible for both. (Be sure to schedule around holidays!)

### Placement Hours:

A minimum of 153 hours of supervised experience with children is required for Practicum III. There are a variety of options available for students to organize these hours. The needs of the sponsoring program should be considered as the student plans.

This is a general guideline for Practicum III. Students may need to schedule hours around holidays and make up time for absences/sick days.

Students who plan for full days in practica should have an **opportunity for a minimum of ½ hour lunch break** and 1-2 coffee breaks in recognition of the longer working day. In this case, students would schedule themselves for 9.5 hours and count 9, or if taking an hour lunch, would be at the centre for 10 hours and count 9.

**Work Experience Agreement Form Note:** Students are required to arrange make-up time with the Sponsor Educator and inform the Practicum Instructor in writing of the revised schedule in order to meet the Work Experience Agreement. If any changes are made to the start/finish dates signed on the original agreement, a new copy must be signed by both parties and submitted to the HDEC office.

## **3. Confidentiality**

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Students and Instructors of Northern Lights College Early Childhood Education program follow strict guidelines regarding confidentiality. All discussions regarding practicum requirements are confidential in nature. Students are **not** to discuss any aspect of their practicum outside of the parameters of the course. Breaches in confidentiality could be viewed by the placement centre as a reason to discontinue the practicum experience. Northern Lights College adheres to the guidelines for reporting abuse as found in *The B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect*.

In the interest of safety for all those concerned, a student should not be left alone with a child or children, meaning that the Sponsor Educator or other staff maintains overall supervision within sight or sound. The intent is that students should not be placed in a supervisory role. The only exception is when a student is also working in the centre. Then the role of staff member supersedes that of a student for safety purposes. There will be times when a student completing a workplace practicum will be scheduled to be on their own with the children. These times should not be scheduled as practicum hours.

## **4. In Case of Illness**

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**Students are expected to email the Practicum Instructor and call the Sponsor Educator by 8 am daily in cases of sickness or inability to attend daily practicum sessions.** Students should not attend their placement if ill or due to injury are not able to interact fully with children. Sponsor Educators who believe the student is too ill to be at the centre are encouraged to send the student home. Once the student is well, hours can be rescheduled.

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## **5. Other NLC Expectations**

As part of their course load for the term, students may be expected to plan and carry out specific experiences/assignments in the practicum centre for other courses they are enrolled in. They are expected to collaborate with their Sponsor Educators in facilitating a time, space, and basic materials to carry out their activities. Any extraordinary materials or equipment needed for an activity will be provided by the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the materials are available.

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## **6. Facilitating Students' Practice**

Please inform the student of the centre's policies in regards to how she/he is to be addressed by the children: (for example – first name, Miss, Mrs. or Mr.). Initially, students will be involved in an assisting role until such time as they are able to work independently under supervision. Right from the start, **students are encouraged to practice using positive guidance and respectfully support children's learning through play based on their everyday observations (of children's ordinary moments).** The student should eventually participate in all areas of the centre's program including preparation and cleanup. Spontaneous implementation of curriculum possibilities in response to children's interests and program needs as well as leading already planned activities allow the student opportunities for valuable experience. Some examples are circle time, story time, etc. It is hoped that Sponsor Educators can support students in taking initiative to engage in these curriculum activities and provide ongoing feedback on a daily basis.

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## **7. Placement Dress Code**

Students are expected to conform to the dress code of the practicum centre, to be professional and respectful in their appearance. Please inform the student of your requirements in this area.

Students are expected to wear/model appropriate dress for the weather! Inside shoes are expected to be worn in case of emergency evacuation.

Students are requested to wear their name tags while at the practicum centre even if in a workplace practica as it helps to remind parents and staff when the employee is also in a student role. This helps to alleviate some confusion with parents and visitors to the centre and promotes awareness of the student's and program's commitment to professional development and quality early childhood education and care.

## **8. Placement Orientation**

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### **A warm welcome for the student can be established and maintained by:**

Meeting with the student prior to the first day to get better acquainted. Exchanging email addresses and telephone contact phone numbers is helpful.

The student's introduction to the centre can set the tone for the practicum. Introduce her/him to the centre. Students indicate that starting a new practicum is like starting a new job. They need to know the things that you would tell them if they were new employees. It is helpful if you indicate, from the beginning, what your expectations are. This could include many of the responsibilities and activities that you expect of regular staff. Let her/him know when you want her/him to arrive (15 minutes early, for e.g. to get settled and prepared for the practicum day), and that you look forward to supporting her/his practice teaching. For example, ensure the student is aware of the program's philosophy and has an opportunity to ask questions for clarification. Inform the student of the daily schedule and usual transition from one activity to the next. Describe how the program/activities are planned. (Please allow for students to try some different approaches and types of activities)

On the practical side, students need to know where to put their belongings, staff washroom, break and lunch policies, if there is a staff room they can use during breaks, where the centre's resources are, equipment policies, what policies and procedures are in place for emergencies, including information on allergies and any other factors that are necessary for her/him to know to ensure children's well-being.

Let her/him know the jobs she/he may do. (Initially, the student is a helper/assistant.) These jobs might include the following:

- To participate in the greeting and going home routines. Encourage the student to take the initiative to introduce themselves to parents as they drop off or pick up their child. Initial introductions/greeting can evolve to brief interchanges based on observations of children's interests and "ordinary moments".
- To assist in the dressing/undressing times.
- To assist in setting out equipment, art materials, table toys, clean up, etc.
- To take on a supportive role during circle/group time to begin with: sitting with the children, helping them to focus on the lead educator. When the roles are reversed, staff would then support the student in the same manner.
- Since this is an introductory practicum experience, having students work with small groups is often best at the beginning of the practicum.
- Let the student know when it would be convenient to discuss the program, children and practicum requirements/assignments on a daily and weekly basis. While daily communication may be more spontaneous, a regular weekly planning time (i.e. Tuesdays at 8:15) would ensure that both of you can count on this time to share ideas and plans.

- Daily communication to confirm plans supports working as a team. Sponsor Educators and students have found it quite helpful to set aside a regular time to briefly touch base: e.g. right before or after scheduled practicum hours.

## **9. Guiding and Caring Policies**

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- Discuss the program Guidance Philosophy with your student and how you set limits and guide children's behaviour. (Please be open to students practicing positive, guidance and explaining / practicing guidance strategies and the constructive guidance approach they are learning in their NLC Guiding and Caring course!) Guidance methods support the strategies outlined in the BC Ministry Handbook- Guiding Young Children's Behaviour
- Encourage the student to consider the role of the environment in guiding children's behavior. For example, what does the student notice about traffic patterns, amount of space, indirect guidance (e.g. 4 chairs out means there is room for 4 children).
- Encourage the student to engage children in problem-solving/conflict resolution as soon as she/he is ready!
- Please invite the student to discuss with you any questions she/he has as she/he strives to understand how staff decide on approaches to guiding children's behaviour. A direct invitation would help your student feel comfortable to take the initiative to ask questions!

## **10. Student Evaluation**

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In order to facilitate the process of evaluation and maximize the learning experience, there are several methods of evaluation.

### **Assignments:**

1. *Introductory Poster*
2. *Learning Stories ( first one is guided)*
3. Video & written reflection/Learning Story
4. Reflections on Practice ( a form of journaling experience)
5. Assessment Booklet, submitted at by student at Midterm & End of term, and a copy completed by the sponsor at the end of term.
6. Participation in All Seminars and Learning Team meetings.

**Practicum III Assessment Booklet:** This is a tool to help focus you on your practical skills and to encourage the feedback process between the student, the Sponsor Educator, and the Instructor.



**For Students:** Weekly: informally assess your skill level in each area. **Add evidence to your copy of the Assessment Booklet throughout your practicum, date the evidence.** You may also use this to informally discuss your on-going progress with your sponsor.

**At midterm you will submit an electronic copy of the assessment booklet to your instructor and arrange a formal meeting with your instructor and sponsor to review the areas Assessment Booklet to discuss your growth and skill level. This discussion may result in you and your sponsor agreeing on some specific experiences or skills that you will place greater emphasis upon.**

**For Sponsors:** Use the assessment booklet as an on-going tool to ensure students are developing skills in all of the areas. **At mid-term:** Participate in the student organized formal meeting to discuss their progress to date. Wherever possible, encourage the student to challenge herself to try out new experiences to enhance areas that you feel would benefit from increased attention. Complete your own copy of the Assessment booklet as the practicum progresses and submit at the end of term. Remember feedback from you is one of the most important elements to the student's learning and is a great communication tool for the instructor.

Any questions regarding the Practicum III Assessment Booklet not cleared up by the student should be directed to the Practicum Instructor.

- Near the end of practicum, after completing the **Final assessment**, you are asked to discuss the competencies with the student to clarify your perspectives which helps the student make plans for future practicum placements.
  - Practicum III Assessment Booklets are submitted to the Practicum Instructor after the practicum is completed. The Student can collect the Assessment Booklet completed by her/his Sponsor Educator scan and send into the course drop box Or the Sponsor Educator can complete the Assessment Booklet electronically and email or fax it directly to the Practicum Instructor. (Students submit the Assessment Tools they complete electronically at midterm and at the end of term)
- a) **Participation: NLC** Practicum Instructors evaluate the students' participation in teleconferenced weekly class seminars and personal seminars.

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## **11. Video**

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Northern Lights College Early Childhood Education students are **required** to facilitate a video of their practice and reflect on/interpret the practice documented once during Practicum III in the **Video** assignment.

The Video provides opportunity for the student to grow through self-assessment and feedback from their learning team - the sponsor and the Instructor.

The Video will provide documentation of the student's competencies in supporting children's learning. Through reflection the student will draw out strengths and competencies to work on.

The student is responsible for setting up the video. A staff member may be asked to do the actual videotaping. If this is not possible, then the student is responsible for providing someone else to come in and video, with your permission.

Confidentiality is maintained. The video is only viewed by the student and the Practicum Instructor. Discs or tapes are destroyed/erased after the assignment has been completed and marked.

*Northern Lights College students adhere to the policy of each practicum placement with regards to notifying parents of the use of observations/photos/videotaping.*

Students are provided with an Observation/Photo/Video Consent Form that can be used to explain the purpose of the Reflective Practice Video and obtain parent consent. This form can be adapted to meet the centre's needs.

Any questions not adequately clarified by the student regarding assignments should be referred to the Practicum Instructor.

**\*Note:** An additional video may be requested if the Instructor feels that additional information is needed in order to adequately assess the student's progress.

## **11. COMMUNICATION with the Learning Team**

One of the challenges of providing a "distance education" type practicum is geography! The Practicum Instructor generally isn't able to visit the placement to meet and talk with students or Sponsor Educators face to face "on location." This challenge is met through individual telephone and email contact with students and Sponsor Educators, the Video assignment, weekly practicum class teleconferences and 3-way telephone meetings.

The student is required to set up a date and time for a conference call to include the student, Instructor, and Sponsor Educator. Discussion will focus on your progress and provide opportunity for clarification of practicum requirements. Please provide your instructor with the date, time and telephone number/s where she/he can reach you and your sponsor educator. Your instructor will confirm or ask you to arrange another date/time. Your Instructor may make the 3way connection or set up a conference call and provide the needed information.

**NOTE:** the student is expected to maintain close contact with the Instructor throughout the practicum regarding any questions or concerns relevant to their practicum. It is their responsibility to maintain contact with the Instructor.

Be prepared to discuss the following topics during team meetings:

1. Students will share the goals set for this practicum.

2. Discuss progress on the Assessment Booklet
3. What competencies have you been practicing and displaying thus far? (Identify three.)
4. Describe how you are establishing a supportive collaborative relationship with your Sponsor Educator and how you could build on this relationship.
5. Instructor will ask the sponsor – how is the student maintaining and displaying professionalism and professional practice (i.e., on time, prepared, etc.)?
6. Does your Sponsor Educator have any questions about the design of the practicum or the use of the Assessment Booklet? Bring any questions you cannot resolve together, or would like confirmation on, to the telemeeting.

Near the end of the practicum experience be prepared to discuss the following:

1. Share with us how you have grown to understand your role as ECE through completing and documenting your work and practical hands on application?
2. How did your Sponsor's comments, knowledge, and guidance support you in achieving your goals ( 1<sup>st</sup> three way meeting)
3. How have you changed professionally and personally as a result of this practicum experience?
4. As you look ahead what competencies need more attention? How will you ensure those competencies will be addressed and worked on? Come prepared to discuss specific examples.

\*Please feel free to contact the Practicum Instructor anytime you have questions or concerns regarding the practicum experience. It has found that open communication works best to facilitate a good experience for the student and the centre.\*

## IN CLOSING

Each student is an individual, and it takes time to get to know your student's level of skill. As you become familiar and comfortable with the student, please encourage the student to take on a larger role. We have found that encouraging and challenging the student facilitates the process of confidence and growth. This, of course, will be different with each student and each centre.

We would like to take this opportunity to **thank the Practicum Sponsor Educators who help students realize their goal in becoming Early Childhood Educators.**

**We appreciate the time, energy, and support that you give to supporting a valuable and memorable experience and quality early childhood education and care!**

Please take the time to fill out the Feedback Form and submit at the end of the practicum; your ideas are appreciated and will be taken into consideration as our practicum design evolves to meet the needs of students, sponsors, children and their families.

# **NORTHERN LIGHTS COLLEGE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PRACTICUM FEEDBACK FORM FOR SPONSOR EDUCATORS**

Practicum is an important aspect to early childhood education training. Practicum involves a partnership between the student, the college, and the centre. We recognize and appreciate the contribution, support, and expertise provided by you and your centre. Your feedback is essential to us to help maintain excellence through practical work. Please take a few minutes and fill out this form. Please give the form to your practicum student to hand in with the Practicum I Assessment Tool, or you can mail it directly to:

**Northern Lights College**  
**Attention: ECEC Department**  
**Box 1000 Fort St. John BC V1J 6K1**  
**Fax: (250) 787-6222 or (250) 785-1294**  
**Email: [ecetadept@nlc.bc.ca](mailto:ecetadept@nlc.bc.ca)**

Comment on each of the topic headings. The information most useful to help design practical work include:

**AREAS OF STRENGTH OR WHAT WORKED**

**AREAS TO WORK ON OR WHAT DIDN'T WORK**

**SUGGESTIONS**

**CONTACT WITH INSTRUCTOR:**

**SPONSOR COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT BOOKLET:**

**REFLECTIVE VIDEO EXPERIENCE:**

**DESIGN OF PRACTICUM HOURS:**

**PRACTICUM DESIGN:**

**ANY OTHER COMMENTS:**

*Thank you*