

INFORMATION STUDIES

PRACTICUM MANUAL

FOR

STUDENTS

OPEN UNIVERSITIES

AUSTRALIA (OAU) STUDY

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AND

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Information Studies at Curtin University of Technology organises practicum placements for all students enrolled in first-qualifying courses in the area of librarianship, archives and corporate information/records management.

Practicums are field placements in environments which offer students the opportunity to obtain work experience and demonstrate professional competencies in a structured environment. It is expected that students will interpret and apply theory, and practise skills acquired during the course. Students may be placed in library and information services or records management centres; however, in some circumstances placements may be arranged in archives or other appropriate information organisations.

The practicum process is a collaborative effort between the student, the Practicum Coordinator and the Practicum Mentor. First-year placements are designed to introduce students to a professional environment, with students expected to fulfil duties typical of a junior library assistant/records clerk in the host organisation. Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters practicums are designed to allow students to experience the work of professionals and in these practicums mentors may take the opportunity to extend students' knowledge further by expecting them to participate in projects.

Students should carefully consider their options when selecting a placement. Although guided by the Practicum Coordinator in selecting placements, they should consider their career prospects or special interests. Each placement is planned individually and all arrangements are made by the Practicum Coordinator, who will call for practicum applications by mid-semester of the semester **BEFORE** the practicum is conducted.

This manual and all relevant information and documentation is available from the Information Studies practicum website: http://humanities.curtin.edu.au/schools/MCCA/information_studies/practicum.cfm

THIS MANUAL IS A GENERIC ONE WHICH IS USED FOR ALL PRACTICUM UNITS LISTED. SOME SECTIONS OF THE MANUAL ARE APPLICABLE ONLY TO CERTAIN UNITS.

2. LIST OF PRACTICUM UNITS

The units which have practicums attached are listed below:

Bachelor of Arts (Librarianship and Corporate Information Management)

Unit	Timing	Hours
Professional Practice in Information Services 102 PPIS102/OUA LIS120 Professional Practice in Information Services (Formerly Information Studies 102 - Information Environment)	First year practicum for all undergraduate students	Unit includes professional work experience of 2 weeks full time plus coursework.
Information Theory & Research 302 ITR302/OUA LIS330 Information Theory & Research	Third year practicum for all undergraduate students	Unit includes professional work experience of 3 weeks full time plus coursework.

Graduate Diploma in Information and Library Studies Graduate Diploma in Records Management and Archives Master of Information Management (MIM)

Unit	Timing	Hours
Information Theory & Research 502 ITR502/OUA INFM130 Information Theory & Research	Practicum placement for all Graduate Diploma students and MIM students enrolled in ITR502/INFM130.	Unit includes professional work experience of 3 weeks full time plus coursework.

Master of Information Management (dual qualification)

Those students enrolled in the Master of Information Management (MIM) who have already completed a Graduate Diploma in EITHER librarianship OR records management/archives will need to undertake a second placement if they are studying for the dual qualification of librarianship AND records management/archives. This second placement will need to be in the alternative field to the first placement. The MIM placement will be attached to an appropriate unit.

3. COURSE REQUIREMENT

Information Studies is very committed to professional experience for students and satisfactory completion of the nominated practicum/s is an **ESSENTIAL** requirement for successful completion of the course of study in which a student is enrolled. Assessment requirements for practicums are outlined in this manual, on the practicum website and in the relevant unit outlines.

Undergraduate students are required to undertake a practicum in a library and information service (LIS) environment AND in a records management (RM) environment since this course is designed to produce graduates qualified in both areas. Some students will undertake the LIS practicum in first year and the RM practicum in third year, whilst other students will undertake the RM practicum in first year and the LIS practicum in third year. The order of the practicums depends on the student's career aspirations, current or previous work experience in the information professions, and units of study completed. Please note: In addition to the two practicum placements, all undergraduate students are required to complete a practical project within an archives environment as part of Archives Concepts & Practice 205 ACP205/OUA LIM215 Archives Concepts & Practice. This project is not a practicum, although it does provide practical work experience in archives. This means that on completion of the undergraduate course all students gain a professionally recognised qualification in librarianship, records management and archives.

Postgraduate students (Graduate Diploma and Master of Information Management) are required to undertake a practicum in library and information service (LIS) environment AND in a records management (RM) environment, depending on their area of specialisation. Students in the records management and archives (RM/A) stream also are required to complete a practical project within an archives environment as part of Archives Concepts & Practice 523 ACP523/OUA INFM270 Archives Concepts & Practice. This project is not a practicum, although it does provide practical work experience in archives.

Some students undertake the Master of Information Management (MIM) with a dual qualification; that is, with a major in BOTH librarianship AND records management/archives. These students undertake a practicum in an LIS environment AND in an RM environment, as well as a practical project within an archives environment. This means that on completion of the undergraduate course all students gain a professionally recognised qualification in librarianship, records management and archives.

4. TIMING OF THE PLACEMENT

For Curtin students the practicum placement should take place before semester commences for the relevant unit. For first semester enrolments the time period is over the summer semester break from December through to late-February. It is often difficult to arrange placements for December, and a start date after mid-January is preferred. For second semester enrolments, the practicum usually takes place during the mid-year break, from mid-June until mid-July.

For OUA students studying during SP3, practicum placements will generally take place after SP3, during SP4.

Students need to make arrangements for leave from work and/or childcare in order to undertake the practicum within these time periods. However, there is some flexibility for exceptional cases where it is not possible to undertake a practicum during the preferred times. Please contact the Practicum Coordinator as soon as possible if you think there may be a problem with the timing of the practicum. This information must be included on the Practicum Application Form as well.

5. PURPOSE OF PRACTICUMS

Practicums are designed to:

- develop students' competence and awareness of policies and practices in the information industry
- allow students to interpret and apply theory and practise skills acquired during the course
- cater for differing levels of competencies depending on which unit students are enrolled

Practicums at different levels have different purposes and are designed to provide different experiences and develop different competencies, as indicated below.

5.1 First year undergraduate practicums

The first-year undergraduate practicum offers a basic introduction to the information profession which allows students to judge whether or not they have an aptitude for, and interest in, working within this field. First year students will occupy a clerical position but should begin to think strategically regarding professional issues. Although mainly involved in clerical work, students at this level should be given an introduction to professional duties and responsibilities.

First-year placements are designed to enhance skills, develop competence and knowledge of the profession, and to increase student self-confidence, as indicated below:

Professionalism

- test students aptitude for basic information related tasks,
- give students the opportunity to reassure themselves that they do wish to work in an information profession,
- provide students with an opportunity to see how some of the theory of information management learnt in the first semester of the course is put into practice,
- introduce students to some practicing information professionals who may be able to give independent guidance and advice on the choice of profession,
- contribute to the students' ongoing socialisation into their chosen profession.

Competencies

- improve proficiency in core competencies required of all those who plan to work in the information industry by:
 - understanding the contexts in which information sources are created, stored, organised, retrieved and disseminated,
 - developing an awareness of clients' information needs,
 - increasing understanding of corporate, social and cultural values in the workplace,
 - recognising the need to plan, forecast, implement and evaluate management of information services,
 - honing generic information management skills,
 - working with others and in teams,
 - learning time management,
 - communicating ideas and information,
 - using a variety of technologies,
 - planning and organising activities,
 - problem-solving,
 - giving students the opportunity to become proficient in standard information work practices and processes,
 - providing students with the opportunity of improving technological skills.

5.2 Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters practicums

Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters practicums are designed to introduce students to the work environment of information professionals and are a bridge between study and the profession. Students at these levels are expected to work as junior professional members of staff, mainly undertaking professional tasks but also some clerical tasks as required. Clerical work, however, should not comprise the major component of these practicums.

Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters students should be exposed to management issues (as appropriate), meetings and discussions of issues facing the practicum venue at the time of the placement.

Professionalism

application of theoretical aspects of the course in a practical environment,
 understanding the operational environment of an information service and the role played in
 that environment by several of its component parts,
 developing and maintaining productive working relationships with professional supervisors,
 contributing to an ongoing socialisation into the profession,
 applying professional ethics and ethos in the workplace.

Competencies

improving proficiency in core competencies required of all those who plan to work in the
 information industry by:

- understanding the contexts in which information sources are created, stored, organised,
 retrieved and disseminated
- building awareness of clients' information needs
- developing an understanding of corporate, social and cultural values in the workplace
- recognising the need to plan, forecast, implement and evaluate management of
 information services
- identifying processes for acquiring, licensing and creating relevant information sources
 by organisation, storage, retrieval and preservation of information
- delivering services customised for clients, promoting information access, providing
 guidance, education and training in the use of information services and information
 literacy skills
- marketing of information services
- honing generic information management skills
- working with others and in teams
- learning time management
- communicating ideas and information
- using a variety of technologies
- planning and organising activities
- demonstrating initiative
- providing evidence of independent thought and reflective professional practice
- problem-solving
- giving students the opportunity to become proficient in standard information work
 practices and processes
- providing students with the opportunity of applying advanced technological skills in the
 marketplace

6. PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Placements may be in any library, records management or information environment where the student can be given supervision by a qualified professional who is eligible for membership of the Australian Library and Information Association, the Records and Information Professionals Australasia or the Australian Society of Archivists. This staff member will be called the *Practicum Mentor*. Placements are not permitted in organisations with unqualified managers except in exceptional circumstances where the staff member has had extensive management experience within the field of study.

Before organising a placement, Information Studies carefully considers the information service, its staff and resources, and the suitability of the organisation as an educational experience for the student. Students are encouraged to suggest possible practicum placements; however, consultation will take place between the student and Practicum Coordinator to ensure the most appropriate choice is made.

Students are required to work the normal hours of the institution in which they are undertaking their practicum and should be rostered to cover the range of opening hours of the service where they are placed. However, hours may be arranged to suit the student and the host supervisor. Duties will be arranged in consultation with the host service and the Practicum Coordinator. Host service holidays are

taken as holidays by the student. The placement is a full-time commitment except in exceptional circumstances.

Students will **NOT** be given a placement in an organisation with which they have a current or prior working relationship. This means students *cannot* do a practicum in their current workplace, even if this occurs outside the hours of paid employment. Previous experience in these situations has shown that students and employers at times find it difficult to distinguish between the practicum and work. Also, it is considered important that students gain a breadth of experience, have an opportunity to work in different types of organisation and be exposed to different corporate cultures.

It is the responsibility of the student to alert the Practicum Coordinator to any potential breaches of this requirement.

6.1 Professional information and competencies

To develop a greater understanding of professional requirements for the information profession, please refer to the following publications and sites.

Library and information services:

The library and information sector: core knowledge, skills and attributes. (2005). Available at:

<http://alia.org.au/policies/core.knowledge.html>

Contemporary salary standards 2009-2011 (2008) Available at:

<http://www.alia.org.au/employment/salary.scales/roles.and.pay.html>

Recordkeeping and archives:

Statement of Knowledge for Recordkeeping Professionals. (2006). Developed jointly by the Australian Society of Archivists and the then Records Management Association of Australasia. Available at: <http://www.rimpa.com.au/professional-development/statement-of-knowledge/>

Tasks, competencies and salaries for recordkeeping professionals (TCSR). (2010) Developed jointly by the Australian Society of Archivists and the then Records Management Association of Australasia Joint Education Steering Committee. Available at: <http://www.rimpa.com.au/professional-development/tcsr/>

7. PROCEDURES FOR ORGANISING PLACEMENTS

This *Practicum Manual* provides students with procedures and a schedule for the organisation and completion of the practicum. It is the responsibility of students to ensure that they check the procedures and schedule and are able to meet the requirements for timely completion of the practicum.

Practicum procedures

1. The Practicum Coordinator advises all students of procedures for the practicums by broadcast email using OASIS and HUM-DIS, the Information Studies e-list. The email includes a link to the practicum website where all relevant information and documentation is available.
2. The student downloads the Practicum Manual from the practicum web site and ensures this is read very carefully. Take particular note of the criteria and guidelines for an exemption or variation to the practicum.
3. The student completes all required documentation (available from the Practicum website) and sends to the Practicum Coordinator by:

Friday 23 September, 2011

Documentation should be completed electronically and sent to the Practicum Coordinator as an email attachment. Inform the Coordinator if this is a problem, as post or fax may be acceptable. The documentation includes:

- The *Practicum Application Form*, ensuring all relevant information is provided. Students must provide three preferences of information services they would like to attend.
- A brief *Curriculum Vitae* including details of current enrolment, units completed to date, previous educational background and employment history, as specified in the Practicum Application Form.

- The *Contact Details* spreadsheet, ensuring all information is provided - scroll left and right in the spreadsheet - and the file is named according to the instructions below. This file must be emailed to the Practicum Coordinator.
 - The [*Student Personal Accident Information Sheet*](#). Ensure this is read very carefully and you are familiar with the insurance coverage. You are NO LONGER required to submit a signed form.
4. When sending emails to the Practicum Coordinator you must use the prac.infostud@curtin.edu.au address not the Curtin address of the Coordinator. The subject line of all emails must include:
 - Your last name and first initial
 - Unit number
 - Your student number
 - Brief purpose of the email
 - e.g. Shillington R ITR502 1234567 Prac application
 5. When attaching documents to an email please ensure all file names include your last name, first name, unit number, and brief title, e.g. Shillington_Bec_LIS330_app.doc OR Shillington Bec ITR502 app.docx
 6. The Practicum Coordinator contacts the information service that is the student's first preference and will seek alternatives if the initial suggestion is not possible. Where two or more students request the same venue as their first preference the Practicum Coordinator will take into consideration the other preferences of each student and the suitability of students for particular venues.
 7. Information regarding the placement is forwarded to the Practicum Mentor and student by email. It is essential for students to monitor their Curtin email accounts in the period leading up to, and during, the practicum placement. All communication will be sent to the student email account.
 8. Students are requested to contact the Practicum Mentor before the practicum commencement date to finalise arrangements for the practicum.
 9. Where possible, Perth metropolitan students will be visited by a member of staff whilst on practicum; distance students will be contacted by telephone at the placement venue.
 10. Letters of thanks are sent to Practicum Mentors by the Information Studies Practicum Coordinator and by the student.
 11. Students must complete the Student Evaluation of Practicum form available from the practicum website and return to the Practicum Coordinator within two weeks of completing the practicum.
 12. Students will undertake assignments in accordance with the demands of the Information Studies unit in which they are enrolled. Details regarding practicum assignments are available in the Practicum Manual, on the Practicum website and in the relevant Unit Outlines.

8. POSSIBLE PRACTICUM LOCATIONS

The Practicum Coordinator will make initial contact with potential placement venues. Students **MUST NOT** contact an information service directly unless requested by the Practicum Coordinator. Students must indicate three preferences for practicum locations when completing the Practicum Application Form. If possible, the preferences should indicate specific organisations (e.g. Vincent Public Library); however, it is acceptable to indicate broader sectors (e.g. public libraries, government records etc).

The following publications and websites are available to assist students in identifying possible placement locations.

Australian Capital Territory Library Service:

http://www.library.act.gov.au/library_services/library_locations_and_opening_hours

Australian Libraries Gateway: Find a Library: <http://www.nla.gov.au/libraries/>

Directory of Queensland Public Libraries: <http://libraries.slq.qld.gov.au/>

New South Wales Public Library Websites: <http://www.nswnet.net/databases/libweb.cfm>

New South Wales Public Library Directory:

http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/services/public_libraries/publications/docs/pl_directory_2010.pdf

South Australian Public Library Directory: <http://www.statelibrary.tas.gov.au/aboutus/findus>

Tasmanian Public Library Directory: <http://www.statelibrary.tas.gov.au/aboutus/findus>

Victorian Public Library Locator: <http://www.libraries.vic.gov.au/librarylocator/>

Western Australian Public Libraries Directory: see <http://www.nla.gov.au/libraries/>

Libraries also can be found listed in the online white and yellow pages.
A growing number of *international directories of libraries* are available on the Web.

Publications listing corporate information services for Records practicums are difficult to find; however, government bodies at all levels are required under legislation to have corporate information services and most large organisations have such departments as well. The criterion for all site selection is that the service must be managed by a full-time, qualified information professional.

8.1 International and interstate placements

The Practicum Coordinator will organise placements for ALL external students, whether located interstate or overseas. Information Studies has contact with many information services and professionals throughout Australia and in other countries. Despite this, external students may be requested to assist the Practicum Coordinator in locating suitable local venues.

Internal students planning to travel interstate or overseas may be able to undertake practicums at information services in these locations, although applications need to be submitted as soon as possible. Practicums have been organised in Britain, the United States, Singapore, Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and Canada. However, please carefully consider career options and personal interests when selecting the information service for practicums as often the practicum provides an avenue for future employment.

Please note: **Curtin University does NOT provide personal accident insurance for students overseas, whether living overseas or travelling overseas for the practicum. Insurance must be organised by the student or arrangements made with the host organisation.**

9. EXEMPTIONS AND VARIATIONS TO THE PRACTICUM

One of the main aims of the practicum is to enhance students' employment possibilities; therefore, students with previous work experience are encouraged to take this opportunity to explore different types of information services. While it is understood the completion of a practicum can cause stress and financial difficulties, a broadening of professional practice can lead to better employment prospects, so students should not be too eager to seek exemptions.

Exemptions and variations to the practicum may be granted but only in accordance with the criteria and guidelines outlined below. Students who think they may be eligible for an exemption or variation to the practicum should read these criteria and guidelines very carefully and then present a written submission to the Practicum Coordinator as soon as possible. Please note, however, that all decisions are made by the Information Studies Practicum Committee, which consists of the Head of the Area, Practicum Coordinator, Course Coordinators as appropriate, and where possible, a student representative nominated by the Information Studies Student Association (ISSA) or its equivalent.

**The deadline for applications for exemptions and variations to the practicum is
Friday 23 September, 2011**

If in doubt about your eligibility for an exemption or variation, please email the Practicum Coordinator as soon as possible and describe your situation.

9.1 Criteria for exemptions – first-year practicum

IMPORTANT

At the undergraduate level, students are required to undertake a placement in a library and information service AND in a records management environment since this course is designed to produce graduates qualified in both areas. Therefore, if an exemption from the first-year practicum is granted on the basis of work experience in a library and information service, or previous qualifications, the third-year practicum **MUST** be undertaken in a records environment, and vice versa. There will be no exceptions to this requirement. You should consider this carefully when deciding whether to apply for an exemption from the first-year practicum. Please note: In addition to the two practicum placements, all undergraduate students are required to complete a practical project within an archives environment as

part of Archives Concepts & Practice 205 ACP205/OUA LIM215 Archives Concepts and Practice. This project is not a practicum, although it does provide practical work experience in archives.

To be eligible for an exemption from the first-year practicum, students must have:

- recent work experience within a relevant library and information service, archives or records management service ('an information service') for a period of at least 6 months full-time or equivalent part-time,
- worked under the supervision of a qualified and/or experienced professional within the relevant field, for the duration of the relevant experience,
- undertaken duties typical of a junior library/records/archives assistant or clerical officer,
- a satisfactory reference from a current or previous professional supervisor supporting the application for exemption and verifying the nature and relevance of duties undertaken, and
- sufficient access to an information service to complete the practicum-related assignment for Professional Practice in Information Services 102 PPIS102/OUA LIS120 Professional Practice in Information Services.

However, students who have extensive, but not recent, work experience in an information service, and/or have worked without the supervision of a qualified professional, may be permitted to offer their experience in consideration of a variation to the practicum requirements.

Note: The Practicum Committee reserves the right to determine what constitutes relevant and recent work experience. For example, a student who meets the criteria but has experience in only one, small information service, may be required to undertake a practicum in a different environment in order to gain a broader experience.

Please read the Guidelines below (Section 9.4) when considering whether to apply for an exemption or variation to the first-year practicum.

9.2 Criteria for exemptions – third-year practicum

IMPORTANT

Exemptions are rarely given for third-year practicums since it is felt that students need to broaden their professional expertise in new environments. At the undergraduate level, students are required to undertake a placement in a library and information service AND in a records environment since this course is designed to produce graduates qualified in both areas. Please note: In addition to the two practicum placements, all undergraduate students are required to complete a practical project within an archives environment as part of Archives Concepts & Practice 205 ACP205/OUA LIM215 Archives Concepts and Practice. This project is not a practicum, although it does provide practical work experience in archives.

Students **MUST** undertake a third-year placement in a different information environment to their first-year placement or the environment they were exempted from in first-year. Therefore, if a first-year practicum was completed in a library and information service, the third-year practicum **MUST** be undertaken in a records environment, and vice versa. Similarly, if an exemption was granted for the first-year practicum, the third-year practicum must be in the alternate environment. This requirement for a practicum in both environments **WILL NOT** be waived regardless of a student's experience in one of the environments, their current working arrangements, or their future employment aims or prospects.

To be eligible for an exemption from the third-year practicum, students must be able to demonstrate relevant and recent work experience in an information service within the alternate environment to their first-year placement or exemption. For example, to be eligible for an exemption from the third-year practicum, a student who completed a first-year practicum in a library environment, or gained an exemption based on library experience, must be able to demonstrate relevant and recent experience in the records environment.

Furthermore, to be considered for an exemption from the third-year practicum, students must have:

- recent work experience within a relevant information service for a period of at least 12 months full-time or equivalent part-time,
- worked under the supervision of a qualified and/or experienced professional within the relevant field, for the duration of the relevant experience,
- undertaken duties typical of a junior, qualified professional within the information service, and

- a satisfactory reference from a current or previous professional supervisor supporting the application for exemption and verifying the nature and relevance of duties undertaken.

However, students who have extensive, but not recent, work experience in an information service; have worked without the supervision of a qualified professional; and/or have not undertaken the duties of a professional, may be permitted to offer their experience in consideration of a variation to the practicum requirements.

Note: The Practicum Committee reserves the right to determine what constitutes relevant and recent work experience. For example, a student who meets the criteria but has experience in only one, small information service, may be required to undertake a practicum in a different environment in order to gain a broader experience.

Please read the Guidelines below (Section 9.4) when considering whether to apply for an exemption or variation to the third-year practicum.

9.3 Criteria for exemptions – Graduate Diploma and Master of Information Management (MIM) practicums

IMPORTANT

To be eligible for an exemption or variation from the Graduate Diploma or MIM (single qualification) practicum, students must be able to demonstrate relevant and recent work experience in an information service within the student's particular study stream. For example, to be eligible for an exemption or variation a student in the Records Management and Archives stream must be able to demonstrate relevant and recent work experience in the records management and/or archives environment.

Students undertaking the MIM (dual qualification), that is, with a major in BOTH Librarianship AND Records Management/Archives, must undertake a placement in a library and information service AND in a records/archives environment since this course is designed to produce graduates qualified in both areas. Students who have already completed a Graduate Diploma in EITHER librarianship OR records management/archives will need to undertake a second placement in the alternate environment to their Graduate Diploma placement.

To be eligible for an exemption from the second MIM (dual qualification) practicum, students must be able to demonstrate relevant and recent work experience in an information service within the alternate environment to their first placement or exemption. For example, to be eligible for an exemption from the second practicum, a student who completed a first practicum in a records/archives environment, or gained an exemption based on records/archives experience, must be able to demonstrate relevant and recent experience in the library and information service environment.

To be considered for an exemption from a Graduate Diploma or MIM practicum, students must have:

- recent work experience within a relevant information service for a period of at least 12 months full-time or equivalent part-time,
- worked under the supervision of a qualified and/or experienced professional within the relevant field, for the duration of the relevant experience,
- undertaken duties typical of a junior, qualified professional within the information service, and
- a satisfactory reference from a current or previous professional supervisor supporting the application for exemption and verifying the nature and relevance of duties undertaken.

However, students who have extensive, but not recent, work experience in an information service; have worked without the supervision of a qualified professional; and/or have not undertaken the duties of a professional, may be permitted to offer their experience in consideration of a variation to the practicum requirements.

Note: The Practicum Committee reserves the right to determine what constitutes relevant and recent work experience. For example, a student who meets the criteria but has experience in only one, small information service, may be required to undertake a practicum in a different environment in order to gain a broader experience.

Please read the Guidelines below (Section 9.4) when considering whether to apply for an exemption or variation to the Graduate Diploma or MIM practicum.

9.4 Guidelines for applying for an exemption or variation to the practicum

Students seeking exemption from the practicum element of a unit are required to forward all documentation to the Practicum Coordinator, via email, by **Friday 23 September, 2011**.

The documentation includes:

1. the *Contact Details* spreadsheet, ensuring all information is provided and the file is named according to the instructions below. This file is available from the Practicum Website and must be emailed to the Practicum Coordinator.
2. a covering letter outlining the reasons for the request. Students must address each of the criteria and indicate how they satisfy these. Note: Even if you are unable to satisfy all criteria you may still be eligible for a partial exemption from the practicum,
3. a brief *Curriculum Vitae* including details of current enrolment and employment history (see item 'd' below), and
4. a written reference from a current or recent manager/supervisor supporting the application exemption and verifying the nature and relevance of duties undertaken (see item 'e' below).

Please carefully consider the following guidelines before submitting an application for an exemption.

- a. There are NO EXEMPTIONS from the COURSEWORK COMPONENTS of the practicum units. A student who gains an exemption from the practicum component MUST remain enrolled in the unit with which the practicum is associated as there are assignments and coursework to be completed.
- b. Students who are currently working or have left a relevant position in an information service to start an Information Studies course may be permitted to offer their past experience as a consideration for exemption from the practicum.
- c. Exemptions may be given in the form of either a total or partial reduction in the amount of time to be spent with a host organisation. In the past, many students eligible for a full exemption have opted to seek a partial exemption in order to broaden their practical experience.
- d. Students seeking an exemption must produce evidence of relevant work experience, including information regarding positions held and duties performed, dates of service (including months and years), and fractional time worked (e.g. full time or 0.5)
- e. Ideally the supporting reference should be from a qualified professional, although at times this may not be possible. In these cases the reference should be from a manager/supervisor with sufficient knowledge and experience to assess the relevance of a student's work experience.
- f. Cases will be considered individually by the Information Studies Practicum Committee, which consists of the Head of Area, Practicum Coordinator, Course Coordinators as appropriate, and where possible, a student representative nominated by the Information Studies Student Association (ISSA) or its equivalent. The Committee will assess applications in accordance with the stated criteria and the evidence presented. The Practicum Committee reserves the right to determine what constitutes relevant and recent work experience.
- g. Any student dissatisfied with a decision of the Practicum Committee should in the first instance discuss their concerns with the Practicum Coordinator. The student may request the Committee review the decision. If still dissatisfied, the student may lodge an appeal against the decision. The appeal must be in writing and must be submitted to the Head of School within 14 calendar days of the date the student was notified of the decision. The determination of the appeal will proceed in accordance with the Assessment Appeals procedure outlined in the Assessment and Student Progression Manual available from: http://www.policies.curtin.edu.au/policies/az_index.cfm .

10. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ENSURING A SUCCESSFUL PRACTICUM

The organisation of a practicum is a complex task and it may be useful if some clarification is given on the levels of responsibility for different aspects of the practicums.

10.1 Responsibilities of the practicum coordinator

The Practicum Coordinator is responsible for:

1. Preparing the practicum material
2. Organising the mentor/student database
3. Updating forms and web sites relating to practicums
4. Organising the practicum with the student and the Practicum Mentor
5. Arranging insurance
6. Ensuring Practicum Mentors and students are contacted during the practicum
7. Managing assessment and evaluation of the student

The initial communication with the Practicum Mentor is normally done by the Practicum Coordinator. This is because sometimes there are constraints unknown to the student; host organisations may have staffing and technology problems, a poor history of providing a good placement for students, or prior commitments to other practicum placements.

10.2 Responsibilities of the student

The student is responsible for:

1. Completing the relevant forms required for the organisation of the placement.
2. Monitoring their Curtin email account prior to, and during, the practicum period.
3. Planning the practicum with the Practicum Coordinator.
4. Liaising with the Practicum Mentor concerning the practicum.
5. Discussing a practicum project with the Practicum Mentor.
6. Contributing to the work of the host organisation.
7. Discussing with the Practicum Mentor, or other staff, ideas for their practicum-related assignment (if applicable). Work on the assignment should not be carried out during the practicum.
8. Reporting any problems, as soon as possible, to the Practicum Mentor and/or the Practicum Coordinator.
9. Writing a letter of thanks at the end of the practicum to the Practicum Mentor.
10. Submitting the assignment relating to the practicum (if applicable).
11. Completing the *Student Evaluation of Practicum Form* and returning this to the Practicum Coordinator within two weeks of completing the placement.

The student is expected to:

1. Be able to communicate in a professional manner with staff and clients.
2. Undertake the practicum without remuneration.
3. Work to the rostered staff times during the practicum including evenings and weekend work where applicable.
4. Treat all staff with respect and consideration.
5. Present him or herself in a professional manner.
6. Act ethically and responsibly with the host organisation, staff and clients.
7. Observe the host organisation's dress code.
8. Undertake all duties assigned to them during the practicum.
9. Observe public holidays taken by the host organisation.
10. Notify the Practicum Mentor at the beginning of the working day in cases of ill health. A medical certificate must be produced for any sick leave of more than two days.
11. Report to the Practicum Coordinator any significant loss of time at the practicum site due to illness or other problems so that decisions can be made about whether or not the student should make up this time.

10.3 Responsibilities of the practicum mentor

The Practicum Mentor should hold a relevant professional qualification and be employed by the host organisation. The Mentor shall be responsible for:

1. Approving the placement for the student.
2. Meeting with the student to discuss the practicum placement.

3. Organising the work schedule for the student and providing the student with a practicum programme. This schedule should cover the range of activities suited to the level of the student. For first year students these may be at a base organisational level but for third year, Graduate Diploma and Masters students this should encompass mainly professional duties. At all levels, depending on the work environment, some non-professional tasks may be undertaken.
4. Providing guidance by giving the student a thorough orientation to the workplace and integrating the student into the work environment and culture.
5. Offering guidance in the selection and management of a practicum project. This project should be of benefit to both the host organisation and the student.
6. Allowing time for the student to discuss with their Mentor, or other staff, ideas for their practicum-related assignment (if applicable). Work on the assignment should not be carried out during the practicum.
7. Alerting the Practicum Coordinator, as soon as possible, should any issues arise that may impact on the success of the practicum, or the student's performance
8. Ensuring the student has regular feedback on his or her performance during the practicum, including a final debriefing session at the conclusion of the practicum in which an overall evaluation is provided.
9. Evaluating the student at the end of the practicum using the Practicum Mentor's Evaluation Form to rate the student on a range of personal, professional and technological competencies.
10. Submitting the evaluation form to the Practicum Coordinator within two weeks of the completion of the practicum.
11. Inspiring and enthusing the student about the information profession.

11. ISSUES PRIOR TO COMMENCING THE PRACTICUM

11.1 Security clearance

In certain circumstances students may require a police security clearance or a Working with Children Check before being allowed to undertake a practicum. Should any students have problems in this area, please contact the Practicum Coordinator before a placement is organised.

11.2 Financial situation

Students are required to meet any expenses involved in the practicum (i.e. travel, parking etc). Students will NOT be paid during the practicum.

Mentors are not paid for supervising students but are doing this as a professional activity, so all courtesy should be extended to them and other staff for their time and effort.

11.3 Curtin insurance

Enrolled students of the University undertaking approved work/field experience are covered under the University Personal Accident Insurance Policy and Public Liability/Professional Indemnity Insurance Policy while involved in authorised activities.

Cover under these policies is **limited to Australia** and may only be provided where:

- the work/field experience is a formal requirement of the student's course/unit;
- the School/Department/Area has approved the work/field experience;
- the student is an enrolled student of the University at the time of the work/field experience;
- the student does not receive any remuneration for the work experience placement (if the student is being paid, the student would be covered by the host organisation's workers' compensation policy)

Details of these policies are available at <http://corporaterisk.curtin.edu.au/insurance/policies.cfm>

Students are required to familiarise themselves with levels of cover in the [Student Personal Accident Information Sheet](#).

Note: Because students receive no remuneration for the practicum they cannot make a workers' compensation claim for loss of income due to illness or injury.

Students having to travel interstate, overseas or intrastate for a practicum placement may be able to receive limited travel insurance. **Private insurance cover is recommended in overseas countries as personal accident cover through the University is not available.** If you have any queries regarding the extent or nature of the coverage provided, please contact the Practicum Coordinator in the first instance.

12. ISSUES DURING PRACTICUMS

12.1 Personal problems

It is the student's responsibility to notify the Practicum Mentor and the Practicum Coordinator if illness prevents attendance at the placement. It is mandatory, as well as courteous, to telephone such information first thing in the morning. A medical certificate must be presented if you are absent from work for more than two days through illness.

Should other matters intrude on the placement it is best to contact the Practicum Coordinator. In certain circumstances the practicum may have to be aborted. Decisions concerning whether or not the student may have to make up time resulting from illness or any other absence from work will be made at the discretion of the Information Studies Practicum Committee.

It is best to contact the Practicum Coordinator as soon as a problem arises so that decisions can be made as quickly as possible.

12.2 Change of practicum placement

Although rare, at times practicum placements are not successful. A student showing due cause can request to be transferred from a placement at any time without penalty. Any request for a change to another placement during the course of a practicum must be discussed initially with the Practicum Coordinator. Any decision must be acceptable to all parties, including the Practicum Mentor. While there may be a variety of reasons for students requesting a change of placement, a situation where the student is not coping with the environment or the work cannot be judged sufficient cause to find a second placement. Inability to function in a work environment means failure of the practicum and subsequently the unit.

A Practicum Mentor may also request the removal of a student. In such a case the situation is assessed by the Practicum Coordinator and the Head of Information Studies, and the student may be allocated another placement or fail the practicum.

The Practicum Coordinator may also remove a student from a placement if it is felt that the placement is not successful, either from the perspective of the student or the mentor. This is only done in consultation with the parties concerned.

Such decisions are not taken lightly and every situation is very carefully assessed. Reasons for problems with a practicum may be incompatibility between student and mentor; poor scheduling of duties so that the student becomes a 'dogs-body' and does not receive the appropriate work experience; complaints from mentors about the student which could include idleness, lack of enthusiasm, poor communication skills, an inability to work successfully with staff and clients, poor presentation in the work-place, and a lack of appropriate skills and knowledge.

NOTE: FAILURE OF A PRACTICUM CAN MEAN TERMINATION FROM THE COURSE. PROFESSIONAL COURSES REQUIRE THAT GRADUATES BE ABLE TO FUNCTION IN A PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY WITH GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS, ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE AND A PROFESSIONAL ETHOS.

13. CONDUCT ON PRACTICUM

Students should be aware at all times of the importance of the practicum in their development as a professional in their chosen careers. This means that students must learn to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner at all times. This includes:

Meeting the Practicum Mentor

The initial visit to the library, registry, archives or information centre should not be made on a 'drop in' basis. Appointments should be made with the Practicum Mentor and a formal meeting set up to introduce yourself.

Dress code

Students should respect the dress standards required by the host organisation.

Personal hygiene

Students should remember that in times of stress our personal hygiene may need extra attention.

Acting professionally

Good time-keeping is essential. Treat supervisors and other staff with appropriate respect, taking care with your interaction with users of the host service. It is wise not to jump to hasty conclusions about the workplace. Organisational dynamics are complex and warrant close attention and careful judgement. Organisational culture, processes and politics may only become evident over time.

Personal concerns

Please try to put aside outside concerns so that you can give full attention to learning in your chosen profession. If personal problems become overwhelming, please contact the Practicum Coordinator for assistance.

And, last but not least!

Keep a sense of humour, and enjoy the experience.

14. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS OF PRACTICUM

The practicum is an important learning experience. Students should watch closely, and be prepared to ask for advice, instruction or clarification if it is needed. People will only perform well if they understand their duties and their role and function within the host service. Do not be afraid to ask for instructions to be repeated if they are unclear the first time.

It also helps if students have realistic expectations of the practicum.

For first-year students remember that this is still at a very formative stage in the course, and there will be many professional duties which students cannot be expected to undertake at this time. The student may be given work which is repetitive and tedious, but it can all be part of the learning experience. It is important for students, as future managers, to be aware of practical processes and procedures undertaken by staff who they may supervise in the future.

Students are encouraged to approach the Practicum Mentor if there are any particular duties they are keen to undertake. This is best broached in the interview prior to the practicum so that rosters can be developed; however, should an issue of importance to the student become evident during the practicum, please request more experience in that area. If the student's desire to do something is not appropriate, and therefore not possible, discussing the situation with the Practicum Mentor will at least clarify the situation.

The practicum is an integral part of the educational programme and is an opportunity for students to experience and understand the realities of working in an information service, to observe and learn the positive qualities and the constraints and limitations of the host service, and to put into practice the skills and knowledge already learnt at Curtin. However, please note the constraints and limitations under which the host service operates and remember there may be sound, if not immediately obvious, reasons for certain decisions and procedures. Do not be too hasty to judge!

Students should take time to reflect on both the theory and practice of professionalism and the ethics and ethos of the workplace, and should develop a thorough knowledge of the operation of the information service and the activities undertaken in providing services to users.

Students who make the best use of the learning opportunities of the practicum are those who can:

- be open and receptive to new experiences and ideas,
- accept and respect the host service by trying to understand its role and purpose and the constraints and limitations under which it works,
- be positive and confident without being aggressive,

connect the concepts and principles learnt in the course to the practices undertaken at the host service,
 carefully observe and reflect on professional issues. Comparison with the situation encountered in prior practicums or other work experience will provide the basis for new perceptions
 discuss issues of concern with your Practicum Mentor and other professional staff.

15. INFORMATION FORWARDED TO THE PRACTICUM MENTOR

Prior to the commencement of your practicum the Practicum Mentor will receive an email with your details and possibly some biographical information about you (from your Curriculum Vitae). Please ensure that on the Practicum Application Form you give permission for this personal information to be conveyed. The email to the Practicum Mentor will include links to the following documents available on the Information Studies website at

http://humanities.curtin.edu.au/schools/MCCA/information_studies/guide_mentors.cfm

- *Guidelines for Practicum Mentors* which outlines the objectives and requirements of the practicum for both the student and host service.
- *Student's Practicum Manual* (this document)
- *Practicum Mentor's Evaluation Form*
- *Curtin University Insurance*

Students are encouraged to read the *Practicum Mentor's Evaluation Form* as this will form part of your assessment for the practicum and related-unit (see section 19.2).

The emails sent to both the Practicum Mentor and student are the official confirmation of the practicum. In the past formal letters were sent to confirm details but time constraints and lack of administrative support now make this impossible.

16. LIAISON BETWEEN PRACTICUM COORDINATOR, MENTOR AND STUDENT

Where possible, Information Studies staff will visit each student in the Perth metropolitan area once during their placement. Extra visits can be arranged at the request of either the student or the Practicum Mentor. The Practicum Coordinator or another member of staff is available by appointment for meetings and discussions either at the University or at the host service.

Information Studies staff will contact distance students and their mentors by telephone or email during the practicum period. Students may contact the Practicum Coordinator by telephone or email if there are any problems. Email may be easier if confidentiality is an issue.

17. CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS – POSSIBLE DUTIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN

The following checklists are to be considered only as a guide to the type of duties students may be expected to perform. They are not definitive or prescriptive; students may not experience all of these duties or may be required to undertake other duties not listed.

Practicum Mentors will be asked to provide students with a practicum programme providing a general structure of assigned duties and activities during the practicum period and to hold discussions with the student explaining how these tasks fit within the overall service.

Practicum Mentors are asked to assign the student **a specific task** or **small project** which will be their own area of responsibility during the practicum (see Section 17.3).

17.1 First-year students

First-year undergraduate students will undertake a range of specified tasks but should observe the organisational culture and ethos, and reflect on the management structure and the environment of the placement venue. Although mainly involved in clerical work, students at this level should begin to think strategically regarding professional issues and be given an introduction to professional duties and responsibilities.

17.1.1 Possible tasks for students working in a Library and Information Service

First-year students in an LIS environment are expected to fulfil duties typical of a junior library assistant/library clerk with the individual host service. This checklist is only a guide to the type of duties students may be expected to perform.

- Shelving and shelf checking
- Desk duties for charging and discharging loans
- Processing membership records
- Processing readers' requests
- Checking readers requests against loans and shelves
- Maintaining loan records
- Sending out recalls or overdues
- Inter-library loans
- Processing new items of stock
- Copy cataloguing
- Circulation of journals
- Filing index cards, microfiche
- Cleaning and repairing books
- Preparing flyers and brochures
- Assisting with outreach activities such as storytelling and children's activities
- Data inputting to the automated catalogue
- Preparing reports of student's project
- Assisting with promotional activities and in-house newsletters
- Scanning of documents
- Searching online databases, at a basic level
- Assisting clients with Internet access, at a basic level
- Assisting reference staff
- Assisting clients with equipment such as scanners, photocopiers, faxes, wifi access points
- Allocating bookings for public Internet PCs

17.1.2 Possible tasks for students working in a Corporate Information/Records Service

First-year students in a corporate information/records service are expected to fulfil duties typical of a junior records clerk with the individual host organisation. This checklist is only a guide to the type of duties students may be expected to perform.

- Processing mail, including
 - Sorting incoming mail
 - Recording mail statistics
 - Mail distribution
 - Processing outgoing mail
- Creating and maintaining physical folders
- Attaching records to files
- File tracking and audits
- Scanning of records, including preparation for scanning
- Searching for and retrieving files
- Processing file requests
- Checking for missing files and records
- Registration of records in corporate system
- Quality assurance of scanned images
- Assisting with promotional activities and in-house newsletters
- Searching databases, at a basic level
- Assisting clients with online file retrieval

Please also see: *Tasks, competencies and salaries for recordkeeping professionals (TCSR)*. (2010) Developed jointly by the Australian Society of Archivists and the then Records Management Association of Australasia Joint Education Steering Committee. Available at: <http://www.rimpa.com.au/professional-development/tcsr/>

17.2 Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters students:

17.2.1 Possible tasks for students working in a Library and Information Service

Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters students undertaking a practicum in an LIS environment are expected to fulfil duties typical of a junior professional with the individual host service. Depending on the host organisation, students may be required to undertake some clerical duties as indicated in the first-year practicum checklist above but this should not occupy the majority of the practicum. This checklist is only a guide to the type of duties students may be expected to perform.

Professional duties

- Conducting bibliographical searches in printed and electronic formats
- Answering reference enquiries by telephone, in person, in written form, and by electronic access
- Selecting and ordering new material for library stock in any format including analysing quality of materials available on the Internet and evaluating databases
- Indexing and abstracting items
- Accessioning, classifying and cataloguing new stock
- Preparing current awareness bulletins
- Organisation of promotional activities, such as displays
- Promoting the service to users and non-users
- Preparing in-house newsletters, flyers and brochures
- Designing and maintaining web-pages
- Developing databases and intranets
- Undertaking outreach activities such as aged services, storytelling and children's activities
- Offering or assisting with information literacy skills training to clients, such as the use of databases and the Internet
- Undertaking specific projects which require self-directed work
- Attending meetings, interacting with staff
- Writing reports, preparing presentations
- Researching and assessing potential technologies and equipment for implementation
- Updating the library/information service's social media presence

17.2.2 Possible tasks for students working in a Corporate Information/Records Service

Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters students undertaking a practicum in a corporate information/records service are expected to fulfil duties typical of a junior professional with the individual host service. Depending on the host organisation, students may be required to undertake some clerical duties as listed in the first-year practicum checklist above but this should not occupy the majority of the practicum. This checklist is only a guide to the type of duties students may be expected to perform.

Professional duties

- Data management tasks, such as migration of data and editing
- More complex retrieval requests
- Appraisal of closed files and more complex items against approved R&D schedule
- File creation on the system
- Preparation of closed files for disposal
- Creation of destruction authority lists
- Assisting in the preparation of selected records for archival storage
- Answering enquiries by telephone, in person, in written form, and by electronic access
- Indexing/classification of incoming items using controlled language
- Promoting the service to users and non-users, such as in-house newsletters, flyers and brochures
- Assisting with policy development, such as an organisational information policy
- Preparing user manuals
- Analysing and evaluating the application of software
- Attending meetings, interacting with staff
- Writing reports, preparing presentations

Please also see: *Tasks, competencies and salaries for recordkeeping professionals (TCSR)*. (2010) Developed jointly by the Australian Society of Archivists and the then Records Management Association of Australasia Joint Education Steering Committee. Available at: <http://www.rimpa.com.au/professional-development/tcsr/>

17.3 Project work

Practicum Mentors are asked that in addition to the specified tasks above, students be assigned a **small project** which will be their own area of responsibility during the practicum. This will provide students with an opportunity for self-directed, independent project work that may be undertaken during 'free' times within the practicum programme. The nature of the project should be determined by the Practicum Mentor in consultation with the student so as to be of benefit to the host organisation and the future career of the student. The scope of the project should allow for it to be completed within the time-frame of the placement and should take into account the student's level of experience.

Third-year, Graduate Diploma and Masters students may be asked by Practicum Mentors to write a report on their project. This report **will not** form part of the assessment for the unit associated with the practicum. However, students at this level may use issues arising from their practicum project as the basis for later assignments in the practicum-related unit.

First-year students are not expected to complete a project report. However, these students are expected to keep a reflective practice journal and should be encouraged to reflect on any project undertaken, as well as other activities and experiences whilst on practicum.

18. REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

The practicum should be used as a time to observe, record, and reflect on the corporate culture of the host institution, events and activities undertaken, problems encountered and issues raised. This reflection should assist students in understanding the fundamental management of successful information services and should provide a backdrop for assignments and future study.

18.1 Keeping a reflective practice journal

Keeping a reflective practice journal is an essential requirement for assessment for first-year practicum placements. However, all students are encouraged to keep a journal to help reflect on the practicum experience and to assist with the development of ideas for practicum assignments.

Holly (1989) suggests that you buy a notebook to write daily notes. Once a week type these up. Although your rough notes may give names of people etc., in the final version it is best to remove these details. In your original journal you may wish to write in different coloured pens to highlight issues, make comments in margins, etc. Use the experience to note your own developing understanding of the service and the activities you have been engaged in. Holly (1989) recommends that you write up the notes as soon after an event as possible while it is still fresh in your mind. Diarists recommend that the journal be written up at a time when you have peace and quiet and time to reflect. Perhaps it may be best to divide the journal into daily sections (part of the time a description of the activities of the day, part a reflection of how much you understood or did not understand, and part a series of questions you need to ask the next day to fully understand what took place).

The following points are taken loosely from Holly (1989).

- Observe closely
- Date all your journal entries
- Write with as much detail as possible
- Allow free flow of ideas (freewheeling)
- A short autobiography at the beginning of the journal can help centre you for the rest of the journal
- Allow time and space to add your reflections of what took place during the day
- Present portraits of people
- Describe events and activities minutely (if you can explain the activity to your journal accurately, then you understand it)
- Be aware of your own prejudices when writing and check later if these observations are accurate
- Ensure confidentiality of all information given to you
- Note your changes of attitude over time, including your understanding of organisation culture and politics, activities and people

Your working journal should serve as a tool to describe and evaluate your observations and experiences during practicum e.g. various tasks and activities undertaken and the importance of such activities,

problems that occurred and any unresolved issues you need to explore further during your practicum or later, observations on the physical situation, specific events, your role, actions taking place, people involved in the workplace and their feelings and observations, and your impressions and interpretations of actions or events. It is important that the journal contain your reflections and thoughts during the period of the practicum so that at the end you can analyse your progress and your increased understanding of the organisational culture.

You may also wish to use your journal to gather and record additional information during your practicum to provide a basis for discussion in tutorials and online discussion. While some students may not feel that they will use this journal in preparing practicum assignments, it may be useful in developing your general knowledge for other units.

Reference

Holly, M. L. (1989). *Writing to grow: Keeping a personal-professional journal*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann.

18.2 Checklist for reflective practice

You may wish to use this checklist to develop ideas for your reflective practice journal or practicum-related assignments. The following is just a broad list of topics and is not meant to be prescriptive:

- Issues relating to the hardware, software, and networks in use in the host organisation
- Use of intranets, websites and social media
- Reference services (online, alerting services, etc.)
- Operational activities
- Experience with retrieval of print, non-print and electronic resources
- Evaluation of collections
- Training programmes for clients
- Organisational culture
- Management styles and techniques

In order to develop knowledge of the work situation, ask yourself about the following:

Role of the Host Service

- Consider the overall aims and functions of the service. What is its mission statement? How well does it reflect the mission statement of the parent authority? Does the service have a strategic plan for the next 5 years? What are its goals and objectives for the next 5 years?
- What are the defined roles of the service? How are these roles presented to the parent authority and the community?
- What is the community served? What services are being provided to the community?
- What is the relationship of the service to its governing body? How does this relationship affect the role, activities and funding of the service? In general, how appreciative of the service is the parent organisation?
- What planning policies exist?
- Does the library have a separate technology or digital strategy? Does the library contribute to the technology or digital strategy of the parent body?

Physical Environment

External Features

- Observe the siting of the service. Is it accessible and central to all its users regardless of physical ability? For public services, do factors such as adequate public transportation, car parking or street lighting have to be taken into consideration?
- Is the service adequately signposted from outside and from important entrance ways (i.e. roads, corridors, footpaths) leading to the service?
- Is the building architecturally attractive and inviting as well as functional? Was the building planned with forethought to satisfy future needs and expansion? Is the layout of the library or registry and/or offices and work areas well done? Does the layout and design affect the nature or quality of the service to users?

Internal Features

Is there adequate room to accommodate the books/records/materials/technology comfortably and efficiently? Does it allow for reasonable user movement?

Does the workroom area have adequate space, light, ventilation? Are there sufficient desks, shelves and trolleys for all jobs to be carried out efficiently? Is the storage space adequate?

Is the lighting bright enough or will it cause eye strain? Is there adequate air movement or air conditioning? Is the best use made of natural lighting?

Is the furniture and shelving functional and efficient, as well as aesthetically pleasing?

In the case of services open to the public, are the rest rooms accessible and adequate? Has consideration been given to the other community/cultural/educational/commercial groups using the library or offices for meetings/discussions/lectures etc.? Are there promotional facilities for exhibitions or posters presenting information on new services and collections?

Customer Services

What services does the organisation offer to clients?

Is the library/records centre committed to a client-focused organisation?

Do the users seem satisfied with the services they receive? Has the organisation undertaken a user survey in the past two years?

How do they evaluate user satisfaction? Are they trying to attract non-users? If so, how?

Personnel

What is the level of staffing? Is there an organisational structure available? What is the percentage of qualified staff to non-qualified staff?

Does this ratio seem adequate to provide the necessary services? Does this structure tally with the standards set by the professional association?

Do staff operate in teams and are their input and skills valued?

Does the service have an orientation or induction programme for new employees?

Are staff adequately trained? What training courses are made available to staff?

Does the service conduct in-service programmes or encourage staff to enrol in other training programmes or courses to enhance work skills?

What is the manager's role and what level of responsibility and status does that person have in the parent organisation? What are some of the duties undertaken by the manager?

Are staff encouraged to undertake continuing professional development courses? Are members of staff studying in formal courses? Which courses are they undertaking and why?

Are staff members of the professional association? Do they support the aims and objectives of the professional association?

Communication

How does the library or records centre communicate with the parent authority?

How does the manager communicate with staff? Are there regular staff meetings, newsletters, bulletin boards (electronic and manual) and intranets?

Are staff within the library or records centre isolated from staff in the parent authority?

Does the library/records centre have representation on planning bodies of the funding authority?

Promotion

How does the library or records centre promote itself to both the clients and the funding body?

Is there a marketing plan in place? Is there a budget for marketing?

Provide some examples of promotion and publicity.

Does the library have a social media presence? Does the library have a strategy for its social media presence? Does the library have a publicly available social media policy?

Technical resources

Information and library services

What integrated automated library system is in use? Does the service use RFID technology or have plans to? What are the issues relating to RFID? What types of catalogues are there?

How easy are they to use? What level of cataloguing is used in this system? Is there access to special collections through the automated system? How easily accessible is information

- through the OPAC, and how well designed is the screen? Do clients have sufficient terminals to easily access the online catalogue?
- Are there indexes for special collections which are not in the catalogue? How are these indexes organised?
- What facilities are there for making reservations and inter-library loans?
- What facilities are there for recovering or charging for lost or damaged books? Are these facilities effective?
- What cooperative networking arrangements exist with other libraries? Does the library have access to other library catalogues and online databases?
- What type of circulation system is used? What are its advantages/ disadvantages?
- Are there database searching facilities, electronic mail or other new technological developments used by the library? How is the electronic mail used? What skills are required to use them? Do the staff train clients to use these services?
- Are items on hold placed on a public shelf for self-service or do users have to ask staff for access? How are these arranged (eg. Dewey number, user surname)?
- Does the library have self-service loans? How is their use encouraged? What is the attitude of the users to them? What is the attitude of the staff to them?
- Does the library have self-service returns (where the user actually discharges the item themselves at a workstation). How is its use encouraged? What is the attitude of the users to them? What is the attitude of the staff to them?
- What information can a client access from home? Personal details? Items on loan? Reservations? Online databases that require library membership?
- Has the library implemented a Discovery Layer product?

Records management services

- What basic services does the registry provide?
- Are there any automated record control systems in use? Do these have good information retrieval capabilities? What staff training is provided in the use of the automated system?
- Does the organisation have an intranet? Who is responsible for maintaining this system? How effective is it?
- How useful is the system for file tracking? What thesaurus is used? How effective is it?
- How is file tracking and bringing up files achieved?
- Are there many missing files and how are missing files located? How easy is it to look for missing files and documents? How easy is it to log in correspondence?
- How well developed is their website? Who manages this? How effective is it?

Stock

Information and library services

- How large is the collection and what is its composition? What formats are included in the stock? Are there any weaknesses, strengths or special features of the collection? What is the acquisition policy and procedures? Is there a written policy and manual?
- Who does the selection of stock? What criteria are used for the selection of new stock? Is the collection well used or are certain areas used more than others, if so, why?
- How digitised in the library service? Do clients receive information via the Internet, online databases, etc.
- Does the reference collection include online encyclopaedias, dictionaries, bibliographical databases, etc. How are these used by clients? Are they easily accessible to clients?
- Does the library provide access to ebooks? Can these be downloaded to users' own devices and read offline? Is the range of ebooks varied and suitable for the type of library?
- Does the library provide any technological devices so that library users can find out more about them? (Eg. Movie editing on an Apple Mac, ebook reading devices)
- Does the library have a subscription to cable television? How many stations? How many places in the building can it be watched? Who controls what is on the screen at any time?
- Does the library have any adaptive facilities for people with disabilities to use the stock (Eg. Separate study area, wheelchair accessible OPACs, screen magnifiers or readers)
- Does the library use any filtering software to restrict any sites on the internet? How does the library publicise this?

Does the library use any automated booking product for public access to library PCs? Does the library have any product that restores public access PCs to a “clean” state after a public access session (eg. Deep Freeze). How is software on public access PCs kept up to date?

What software is available for public use on internet PCs?

Are there enough public access PCs?

Does the library allow users to use their own storage media such as USB drives on public PCs?

Does the library maintain an institutional or research data repository?

Does the library provide copyright advice and information to users?

Records management services

How many files are held in the records centre? Are there any weaknesses, strengths or special features of the filing system?

How is material archived? Who is responsible for archiving? Are archives held onsite or transferred elsewhere? Do individual departments hold their own collection of files?

Is there a disposal schedule? Who is responsible for updating this?

Is the records centre amalgamated with a library service?

Service, programmes and outreach

Information and library services

What services are offered by the library?

Do the users seem satisfied with the existing services?

Does the library offer any extra services such as audio-visual material, housebound reader services, toys, games, holiday activities, acquisition lists, indexing or journal articles, reader education or any others of the many that could be offered?

Does the library provide any technological devices?

What outreach programmes exist? How are these managed and evaluated?

Does the library have a big screen display that publicises programs and services? Who maintains this and is it kept current?

Records management services

What services are offered? How are these services evaluated by users?

Does the records centre provide facilities such as photocopiers, email access, and web management facilities for the convenience of users?

Finance

What are the primary sources of funds? Does the librarian or records manager have input or control over the allocation of funding to the library or records service?

What factors does the manager take into account when formulating the budget? Does the funding authority impose any constraints on the services and on future developments?

What are future plans? How do they budget?

External Relationships

Information and library services

Do the library staff meet and work with other agencies and groups in the community?

What are the relationships with other information handling departments such as information systems and the records centre? Are the organisational archives in the library or records centre?

Does the library have any informal or formal relationships with other libraries?

How involved are staff with the information profession?

Records management services

What are the relationships with other information handling departments such as data processing and the library? Is there information over which records officers have no or little control?

Are the organisational archives in the library or records centre?

How involved are staff with the information profession?

Access to the World Wide Web

How far is this collection digitised? What formats are digitised? How well are they indexed?

How is the website designed? Does it have links to policy documents and other publications of the information service? Do staff have web pages?
 Is there a web page of links to other important sites?
 What material is placed on the website? What are the future plans for making material available online? Who maintains the website?
 Who uses the website? How is use identified?
 Is the library website part of the parent-body website? How does this affect how it can be managed, the design elements and what information can be published there?
 Do the library staff use any web analytics programs to assess usage of the website (eg. Google Analytics)

Training

What is the policy of the information service to training clients to use facilities and services?
 What training programmes are there in place?

Entrepreneurial activities

What entrepreneurial activities (if any) are organised by the information service? What is the rationale behind such activities? Is the organisation expected to raise funds?

Strengths and weakness of the organisation

Identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and do a SWOT analysis. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats).

18.3 Student portfolios

Students are encouraged to develop portfolios of projects and other work undertaken during their course. This includes collecting relevant material from the practicum placement. The practicum portfolio may include publicly available information such as brochures, flyers and other promotional material. However, students may wish to retain for their portfolio copies of internal reports and documents. Students must check with the Practicum Mentor before collecting any information from the host organisation that is not in the public domain. There may be important issues of privacy and confidentiality at stake.

19. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

All students must be able to demonstrate to both the Practicum Mentor and Practicum Coordinator that they have managed to relate class learning to operational experience in their host service. In addition, students must also be able to demonstrate that they have a sound grasp of both the theory and practice of the relevant area of study and the requisite skills and knowledge to become practitioners.

The student's performance will be evaluated in a number of ways:

- The assignments for the practicum-related unit (see the Assignments link on the Practicum website).
- Evaluation by the Practicum Mentor of the student's performance whilst on practicum
- Evaluation by an Information Studies staff member
- Self-evaluation of the practicum placement and student's performance

19.1 Assignments

The practicum assignment for Professional Practice in Information Services PPIS120 & LIS120 students will be a reflective practice journal maintained throughout the placement, as discussed above (See the Assignments link on the Practicum website for more details of the assignment requirements).

Third-Year, Graduate Diploma and Masters students will have assignments that **may be** based on their practicum experience. At the commencement of semester, the Unit Coordinator of Information Theory & Research 302/502 & LIS330/INFM130 will guide students in the selection of an appropriate assignment topic that **may be** drawn from the student's practicum experience. The topic might relate to:

- a project the student worked on that they would like to investigate further,
- an issue raised by the Practicum Mentor that requires deeper examination, or

- an issue relating to the services and/or operations of the information service that has sparked the student's interest.

Work on the assignments should not be carried out whilst on practicum. During this time you should only be thinking about, or discussing with your mentor, possible topics for the assignment. (See the Assignments link on the Practicum website for more details of the assignment requirements).

Students who are completing a Practicum later in the semester or who have an exemption from the Practicum will need to complete the same assignments as discussed above, but the selection of topic should be based on:

- an issue that has been raised in your current or previous workplace (archives, records or library), or
- an issue that has interested you (through lectures, readings, etc) in your course.

Masters students who have already completed Information Theory and Research 502/INFM130, and are undertaking their second practicum, do not need to complete an assignment based on the practicum. The second practicum will be allocated to an appropriate unit and successful completion of the practicum will be necessary to pass this unit.

19.2 Evaluation of the student by the practicum mentor

Assessment will include an evaluation of the student's performance by the Practicum Mentor. The *Practicum Mentor's Evaluation Form* is available on the Mentors' Practicum website. Students are encouraged to read this form prior to the practicum as it will form part of your assessment for the practicum and related-unit.

Mentors are asked to discuss the evaluation form with the student at the conclusion of the practicum and, if possible, provide the student with a copy at this time. However, it may not be possible or convenient for the mentor to finalise the form by the end of the placement period. If students do not receive the completed form at the conclusion of the practicum, or from the Practicum Mentor at a later date, they will be able to request a copy from the Practicum Coordinator.

Many students will use the *Practicum Mentor's Evaluation Form* for employment purposes.

19.3 Evaluation by Information Studies staff

For all practicum placements, the Practicum Coordinator or another Information Studies staff member will contact Practicum Mentors to check on the progress of students. If possible, students will be contacted at these times as well.

Each student in the Perth metropolitan area will receive one visit during their placement. Extra visits can be arranged at the request of either the student or the Practicum Mentor. For practicums outside of Perth, students and their Practicum Mentors will be contacted by telephone or email once during the practicum. In all cases, Practicum Mentors and students may contact the Practicum Coordinator as often as necessary throughout the placement.

19.4 Student evaluation of the placement

Students must complete an evaluation of the placement and the practicum process. This helps Information Studies plan future practicums and also gives the Practicum Coordinator feedback on the suitability of the information service for future student practicums. Perhaps, more importantly, self-reflection is an important part of professional development.

The *Student Evaluation of Practicum Form* is available from the Information Studies Practicum website and must be submitted within two weeks of the completion of the practicum. Submission of the Evaluation Form is a requirement for successful completion of the practicum.

20. PRACTICUM COORDINATOR

The Practicum Coordinator is:

Rebecca (Bec) Shillington
Information Studies
School of Media, Culture and Creative Arts

Curtin University of Technology
GPO Box U1987,
Perth WA 6845
Fax: (08) 9266 3152 (Please mark Attn: Bec Shillington)
Email: prac.infostud@curtin.edu.au

Where possible, please contact by email using the email address above rather than the Coordinator's Curtin email address. Please allow 2-3 days for a response to your enquiry. The Practicum Coordinator is not available every day. Should the matter be very urgent please contact the School office on (08) 9266 7211. If no answer is received in the designated timeframe please contact again.

Enjoy your practicum!