

Student Guide: Preparing for Community-Engaged Experiences

Faculty of Social Sciences | Experiential Education | McMaster University



SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Introduction and Acknowledgement

Community-engaged experiences are not possible without the participation, commitment and support of community partners. Likewise, we cannot begin to prepare students for engaging in the community without community input.

This resource has been developed in partnership with several community organizations.

Over the years, we have received feedback from our many partners about how we can best support students in their community-engaged learning and have received the assistance of the following organizations, who shared their own resources, to assist us with compiling this document. Many thanks to each!

[Compass Community Health/Pathways to Education](#)

[Ronald McDonald House Charities South Central Ontario](#)

[Shalom Village](#)

[St. Peter's Residence at Chedoke](#)

[Wesley](#)

Choosing a Placement

Participating in a community-engaged experience is a unique opportunity. It allows you to be part of the community and learn more about the world around you. It also allows you to see the theories learned in class in a practical setting; to build skills, experience, and professional contacts; and to explore possible career options.

Some practical items should be considered such as the days and times you are required as well as the location of the placement. You may be available to volunteer once per week for a full day, but the organization may only require your time for half a day or every other week. Some roles may require a full-year commitment and, although you are interested, if you can only commit to one term, it may not be a fit.

When looking at your placement as a learning opportunity, you are encouraged to also consider the following:

- Which skills am I hoping to gain or enhance?
- What type of work setting am I hoping to gain experience in?
- What are my personal interests and values and do they align with this organization or opportunity?
- Is there a particular demographic of individuals I am interested in working with?
- Have all of my past experiences been somewhat similar and is this an opportunity for me to diversify my experiences, skills and networks?

Each student should decide what is most important for them, while understanding that you will likely not be able to address all of these in one placement. Give some thought to what is most important to you.

While your personal goals help determine a placement, don't forget one important concept – reciprocity.

Reciprocity is the notion of an exchange that is **mutually beneficial**. In other words, the community partner is not expected to “provide” a learning opportunity for you, they are looking for a **partnership** where their particular needs are met through your engagement, and you will learn through helping them meet their goals and actively participating in the organization through your placement.

We ask all students to watch the video by Wesley that is listed in the checklist below. There are many valuable topics covered and things to consider that will assist you with thinking more critically about your experience before beginning the placement process, regardless of which organization you connect with.

Chapter Checklist

- ☐ Identify your goals for the placement.
- ☐ Understand the concept of reciprocity and be willing to commit to it throughout your placement.
- ☐ Watch the [*Best Practices for Volunteers \(Video\)*](#).

Contacting a Community Partner/Host Organization

In the Faculty of Social Sciences, we are fortunate to have developed relationships with many wonderful, dedicated, and unique community partners over the years and it is important to maintain these positive relationships. One way for students to demonstrate respect for the organization, their time and their clients, is to be prepared before contacting the organization to inquire about a placement.

We have received feedback from community partners that they appreciate when students do the following before contacting them:

Review the organization website. Even if you have read a position description, it is important to invest the time in getting to know the organization so that you have a clear understanding of their mission and values, the services they provide, and the clients they work with. This information will help you determine if the organization is a fit for you, and will show the community partner that you aren't just looking for a place to complete hours, but that you have a genuine interest in their organization. When you meet with someone from the organization, you'll already know a bit about what they do, and hopefully have a few great questions ready to ask to show interest.

Prepare a resume. Although not all organizations will ask you for this, it is a good idea to have it ready. Think of this as a professional learning experience. Each organization has particular criteria each volunteer must meet, and being able to provide them with a quick snapshot of who you are through your resume may help them gain insight about you more quickly.

Communicate clearly, professionally, and respectfully. If you contact the organization by telephone, be sure to speak clearly and slowly, and leave your name and phone number indicating why you are contacting them. If they are not able to understand your message, they will not return your call. It is also a good idea to leave some days and times that you are available to be reached, and be sure to be available at those times. Remember that you are expecting a return phone call, so answer calls professionally with a "Hello" (not with "Hey" or "Ya" or "Hi"), and ensure that the voicemail greeting on your phone is also professionally appropriate.

If contacting the organization by email, be sure to use professional etiquette – do not write emails as though you are texting a friend. Always start with a greeting, addressing your email to "Dear or Hello *name of supervisor*" (not just "Hey" or "Hi"). Also be sure to sign off with "Sincerely, *your name*". They will not know who you are by your email address alone. Avoid all email and texting slang or short forms. Also, please consider using your McMaster email address or a professional personal address. Some personal email addresses may not convey a professional tone when contacting employers.

Whether you are calling or emailing, you are making a first impression and differentiating yourself from other students and volunteers. This is an opportunity to demonstrate your communication skills, enthusiasm, professionalism, and interest in the position.

Staff at community organizations are very busy and their priority is to ensure the effective running of programs and services at their organization for the benefit of their clients. You may have to wait several days to hear back from whomever you contacted. Keep this in mind and plan your time accordingly. Don't wait until the last minute to reach out. Reach out as soon as possible to provide ample time to hear back and get the process moving.

If you do not hear back from the person you contacted, we recommend a polite follow up 3-4 business days after the initial contact. If you emailed the first time, try a telephone follow up or vice versa. Simply let them know you are following up to your previous email/phone call and express your interest in learning more about possible roles at the organization. You can mention that it is for a course during the term, but do not pressure them to contact you in a particular time frame. Most organizations are aware of the course durations and will get back to you as soon as they can. However, if you are short for time, you may consider reaching out to an alternate organization.

Chapter Checklist

- ☐ Read through the organization website before contacting them and have an understanding of their mission, values and services.
- ☐ Prepare a resume.
- ☐ Ensure that your communication by telephone and email is clear, professional and respectful.



Getting Started

It is important to note that organizations do not have to accept you as a volunteer simply because you are a student, are interested, and have been referred by the university through a course. Their goal is to work to achieve the mission of the organization and have a screening and selection process they go through before any volunteers are accepted and placed. These are some items that may be required before you can be selected and begin:

Interview – Often the first step in you becoming a volunteer or placement student is an interview. This allows someone at the organization to meet you, ask relevant questions, assess your skills and strengths, and determine if there is a fit between you and the organization. Although it is an interview for a volunteer role, you are making a first impression and should put forth a professional tone. You do not need to wear formal clothing, but should avoid ripped/torn jeans, short shorts, etc.

Reference Check – After a successful interview, many organizations will complete a reference check. This allows them to ask questions about your work habits, personality, etc., and further determine your suitability.

Police Check – There are three different types of police checks, and each organization determines if a police check is necessary for the role you will be participating in and which type of police check is required. Police checks are usually conducted at a cost to you. Some organizations allow you to submit police checks that were previously conducted, as long as they fall within a particular time frame (e.g. six months, one year, etc.). The criteria around police check requirements varies between organizations.

Students can only have police checks completed in the municipality in which they reside/have a permanent address. However, if you have a temporary address in Hamilton for school, and can provide proof, they will complete the police check at Hamilton Police Service. **See Appendix I for more information.**

Medical Tests – Some organizations such as hospitals and long term care facilities may require medical tests such as a two-step TB test or may want to ensure that you have a flu shot or other vaccinations. These rules are often governed by a larger body such as the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and are not flexible. Students are typically expected to cover these costs.

Orientation – Orientation takes place either before being accepted as a volunteer or after. It is a broad overview of the organization as a whole and typically does not provide specific information about your role. It is necessary to help you understand the goals of the organization so that you can move ahead with properly fulfilling your role.

Training – Usually the final step in the process is training. This is specific training related to your role so that you are aware of the expectations, know how to complete tasks properly, understand and use procedures and protocols, follow guidelines, etc. Training is put in place to ensure that you can contribute positively and safely to the organization and learn from your experience, as well as to ensure that clients and program participants are safe and that program goals are accomplished.

Once all of this is complete, you're ready to begin! Each organization has a different "on-boarding" process, so the more quickly you respond to them at each part of the process, the more quickly the placement can start.

As most students only have one academic term to complete their placement, anything you can do to complete possible requirements in advance is helpful in getting through the process more quickly and starting your placement so that there is more time to get involved, contribute, and learn.

Chapter Checklist

- ☐ Have an understanding of what your host organization may require from you before you begin volunteering. This may include the following:
 - Interview
 - Reference check
 - Police check
 - Medical tests
 - Orientation
 - Training
- ☐ Be aware of timelines for completing any required tasks above (some may take several weeks).
- ☐ Work to complete requirements as soon as possible and within desired timeframes for both the organization and the instructor.
- ☐ Review information about police checks found in **Appendix I**.

Expectations and Guidelines

Each organization has its own set of volunteer guidelines and policies. It is important to respect and follow those guidelines. There is also an expectation from the Faculty of Social Sciences that you conduct yourself in a way that positively reflects the Faculty, your department, your course/instructor and the university. These expectations are also present in professional settings after graduation. Keep in mind that your supervisor may be a reference for you after the placement or that you may wish to apply for a future job at the organization. Some basic guidelines include the following:

Cell Phone and Technology Use

It is not appropriate to use your cell phone while volunteering/completing your placement. Full attention must be given to the task at hand, particularly if you are working with people. Similarly, it is not appropriate to use devices such as headphones, laptops, etc. while volunteering. Never take and share photos (via text, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) while volunteering, due to privacy and confidentiality concerns. Your host organization will provide you with their specific cell phone and other policies when you begin your placement.

Dress Code

You are building professional experience while completing your placement. Plan to dress according to the work environment and as per guidelines set by the organization. Some roles may require you to wear close-toed shoes (e.g. if you are lifting anything that may fall on you or working near wheel chairs or other portable devices). Some organizations may have a uniform such as a vest that needs to be worn. You may be asked to dress very casually at some placements and be required to dress business-casual at others.

Hygiene and Scents

Some organizations have scent-free policies, so please keep in mind the use of beauty and self-care products that may cause a problem for others you are sharing space with. Also be sure to keep your own personal hygiene in mind when working with others, particularly in a more clinical setting such as long-term care, hospitals, and clinics, or around food, where clean and sterile environments are important.

Confidentiality and Privacy

It is expected that students maintain the strictest confidentiality regarding information they hear, see and learn at the placement. This can be information about service users, program participants, staff or the organization as a whole. Organizations typically have a confidentiality policy and agreement that they will have you sign. Your instructor will also speak to you about McMaster ethics for community-engagement.

Boundaries

It is important to **maintain professional boundaries** at all times during your community-engaged experience. Although you may have developed a **friendly relationship** with clients/program participants while volunteering, it is important to remember that you are **not friends** and are required to be emotionally professional. You are there on behalf of the organization to provide a function to assist the organization with achieving their mandate.

Guidelines about boundaries are for your safety and the safety of the clients include:

- Do not share personal information (phone number, address, etc.) with clients.
- Do not connect on social media with clients.
- Do not accept gifts from clients.

Most organizations have specific policies about this. Be sure to read those policies and ask your supervisor if you are ever uncertain about the boundaries of your role or if a circumstance arises that you are uncomfortable with.

Professionalism and Gratitude

Treat your supervisor, staff at the organization, fellow volunteers, and clients with respect at all times. Show appreciation to your supervisor as they are taking time out of their schedules to partner with us and provide you with a valuable learning opportunity and share their expertise with you.

Your community supervisors may be individuals you will ask for reference letters, or jobs, after the completion of your placement. They may be willing to write you a reference letter, but only if they are impressed by your work, attitude, and skills. They are not obliged to do so. They may be more comfortable providing a letter of completion stating that you completed a particular number of hours with them, and this is at their discretion.

At the end of your experience, thank them for the opportunity by sending an email or note. **See Appendix II.**

Chapter Checklist

- ☐ Have an understanding of general expectations and guidelines of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the host organizations including:
 - Cell phone and technology use
 - Dress code
 - Hygiene and scents
 - Confidentiality and privacy
 - Boundaries
 - Professionalism and gratitude
- ☐ Review information about thanking your supervisor found in **Appendix II.**

Attendance

Commitment

Be sure to commit to the schedule you agree upon with the placement organization:

- Be early or on time each shift.
- Be “present” and engaged during your entire shift and take initiative.
- Stay until your scheduled shift is done, even if all assigned tasks are complete.
- Attend each shift that you have committed to, even when you have reached the hours required by the course.

Be aware in advance of any commitments that you have (exam dates, etc.) and plan your time accordingly so that you will not have to miss your placement. Let your supervisor know if there are any shifts you may need to miss or switch before you accept the placement.

It is not the responsibility of the host organization to make accommodations for you to make up missed time to ensure you reach the placement hours required for your course. Some organizations may be flexible and able to accommodate. Others will not be.

Illness

If you are ill, contact the organization with as much time in advance of your scheduled shift as possible. Some programs cannot run without adequate volunteer support and may need to find an alternate volunteer. Also, good infection control is vital to organizations, especially those serving vulnerable people who are susceptible to illness. It is important to be aware of the illness policy at your organization and act accordingly.

Accountability and Punctuality

It is your responsibility to ensure you are clear on the time you are to arrive at and finish your placement. Plan accordingly for weather and bus times. Missing the bus or forgetting to set your alarm are not valid reasons to miss placement or be late. Take responsibility for your schedule, ask for information/clarification, and take initiative. Being punctual and accountable will not go unnoticed by your supervisor.

Tracking Hours

It is your responsibility to track hours. Please use the time log sheet provided in **Appendix III**. Please do not approach your supervisor at the end of the term asking if they have tracked hours for you. Give your supervisor at least one week’s notice if you need them to sign off on your hours. They may need time to look up the information.

Hours tracked typically include any required training as well as actual volunteer hours. You cannot track travel time to and from your placement or “pre-volunteer” processes such as an interview or orientation.

Chapter Checklist

- ☐ Have an understanding of expectations of your attendance and what to do in the event that you cannot attend.
- ☐ Track your hours regularly and consistently by using the time log sheet found in **Appendix III**.



Supervision

It is important to know who is responsible for you at the organization while volunteering. In some cases, the person responsible for getting you started may be different from the person who provides you with day-to-day supervision.

Ensure that you know who to go with questions such as:

- Clarifying how to complete a task or follow a policy appropriately
- Concerns about clients or health and safety
- Reporting an absence
- Support for achieving any learning objectives you may have

Also be aware of who you should go to with questions if your supervisor is absent. If you are not told during training, ask. Also inquire about how often you need to check in with your supervisor during your placement.

Your **course instructor** is another support during your placement as well as Ruthanne Talbot in [Experiential Education \(EE\)](#). If you have any questions or concerns about your placement you can approach either of them for support. Your instructor or Ruthanne will also liaise with your supervisor to receive feedback from them about how your placement is going from their perspective.

Chapter Checklist

- ☐ Know who your supports are during your placement.

Supervisor

Name:

Email:

Phone Number:

Alternate Supervisor

Name:

Email:

Phone Number:

Instructor

Name:

Email:

Phone Number:

Experiential Education

Ruthanne Talbot

talbotr@mcmaster.ca

905-525-9140 ext. 23382

Health and Safety

The health and safety of students on placement is of the highest priority. McMaster University and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) have policies in place that guide student safety. Your host organization will also have their own policies.

It is important to strictly follow the guidelines and policies of McMaster University, MCU, and your host organization as they have been put in place for your protection and the protection of the people you are interacting with at your placement.

Students completing unpaid placements as part of an academic course are required to print and complete the following documents, and return them to the course instructor, unless otherwise indicated:

- **Students** sign the [student declaration letter](#), required to let them know, via sign-off, they have coverage via WSIB or Chubb Insurance (private coverage) and to report incidents accordingly;
- **Placement “employers”** sign off on [Letter to Placement Employers](#), noting that they have been informed that WSIB coverage (or Chubb insurance/private coverage) is provided via the M, and therefore their respective WSIB standings (i.e. premiums) will not be effected; and,
- **Students and placement “employers”** both sign off on the [Pre-Placement Safety Orientation Checklist](#).

Chapter Checklist

- Complete all required health and safety forms and return to your instructor before beginning your placement:
 - Student Declaration Letter (**Appendix IV**)
 - Letter to Placement Employers (**Appendix V**)
 - Pre-Placement Safety Orientation Checklist (**Appendix VI**)

Skills Identification for Resume, Cover Letter and Networking

After completing your community-engaged experience, think about the skills you have developed or enhanced. Use the list below to help you get started. Employers seek these “essential skills” from future employees. This list is not exhaustive, and some points may not apply to your experience. It is intended to provide guidance as you update your resume, create cover letters, and prepare for interviews or networking opportunities.

By adding some details that are specific to your experience, you have the foundation for some great points on your resume! The list was created using The Conference Board of Canada’s [Employability Skills 2000+](#).

Written, oral and verbal communication skills (Fundamental Skill)

- ☐ Speak using professional and appropriate language with staff, volunteers, clients or families
- ☐ Listen and ask questions to understand and appreciate the points of view of other individuals
- ☐ Take note of instructions given and ask clarifying questions if unsure about tasks or required outcomes
- ☐ Share information about the organization or program using a range of appropriate communications technologies (e.g. in-person, e-mail, memos, social media, etc.)
- ☐ Write reports and/or make presentations to disseminate relevant and accurate information
- ☐ Discuss ideas, issues and successes with your supervisor or team throughout your experience

Managing information (Fundamental Skill)

- ☐ Research information about the organization, programs and clients prior to applying for your role and/or beginning your role
- ☐ Make connections about how you can apply theory and knowledge learned in the classroom to your community-engaged experience
- ☐ Connect the knowledge that you learned with your personal goals in order to write an effective reflection paper or final assignment
- ☐ Conduct a successful scan to locate and gather a sufficient amount of information that is relevant to tasks you may have been assigned
- ☐ Organize information and data in a meaningful way so that it can be interpreted
- ☐ Use technology/software to assist with the statistical analysis of your information

Using numbers (Fundamental Skill)

- ☐ Make decisions on important factors to be addressed/measured as part of your project/report
- ☐ Observe and record data using numbers, technology and/or other tools for reports or statistics
- ☐ Make educated estimates that were either verified or disproven with the use of numerical data

Thinking and solving problems (Fundamental Skill)

- ☐ Use analytical and critical thinking skills to identify problems that exist or might arise in future
- ☐ Assess possible solutions and undertake a thoughtful plan of action when encountering unexpected obstacles during your community-engaged experience
- ☐ Seek different opinions while attempting to resolve a complex issue
- ☐ Use creativity to compile a list of possible ways to solve the problem(s)
- ☐ Evaluate possible scenarios and make clear recommendations for the most effective solution

Demonstrating positive attitudes and behaviours (Personal Management Skill)

- ☐ Show interest, initiative and effort in getting to know the organization (including programs offered)
- ☐ Use honestly, integrity and ethics when dealing with people and situations
- ☐ Show interest in your classmates and colleagues and recognize how their individual work and effort contributes to the success of the organization
- ☐ Take initiative within your role by searching for things to complete before having to be assigned
- ☐ Engage and show genuine interest in your role, especially when interacting with others (e.g. supervisor, clients, members of the community, etc.)
- ☐ Take initiative to ask about further involvement or future opportunities to connect with the agency

Being responsible (Personal Management Skill)

- ☐ Plan and manage your time accordingly to arrive on time at your placement
- ☐ Complete tasks according to timelines set by your supervisor or group?
- ☐ Take accountability for and learn from mistakes, and accept constructive criticism positively
- ☐ Manage resources appropriately (e.g. confidential information, passwords, technology, etc.)
- ☐ Organize your time effectively to ensure that other responsibilities such as classes and work do not impact your ability to complete your placement commitment

Adaptability (Personal Management Skill)

- ☐ Manage an unexpected change that was out of your control in an effective manner
- ☐ Accept information, feedback and instructions readily from placement staff, even if it differs from your idea of what was originally expected
- ☐ Respond to unforeseen changes in your work plan/timeline to help ensure a successful outcome
- ☐ Work effectively both independently and as a team member
- ☐ Use “mistakes” as learning experiences and be receptive to constructive feedback

Continuous learning (Personal Management Skill)

- ☐ Identify your own learning goals to be achieved through the placement or project
- ☐ Take advantage of opportunities to make new connections, or participate in new activities
- ☐ Attempt to be mindful of the learning taking place while completing your assigned tasks
- ☐ Consider your own areas for improvement and work toward making those improvements

Working with others (Teamwork Skill)

- ☐ Recognize and respect the individuality and diversity of others' experiences and opinions
- ☐ Accept and provide feedback about your experience in a constructive and thoughtful manner
- ☐ Work within established dynamics of the organization or your group towards a common goal
- ☐ Contribute in either a leadership or support role, depending on what was required to help the team achieve its overall goals
- ☐ Remain open to new ideas, diverse viewpoints, and the variety of individuals within your group
- ☐ Share your ideas in a professional manner and positively contribute to any conflict resolution

Completing/managing projects (Teamwork Skill)

- ☐ Plan or carry out a project or task from start to finish with well-defined objectives or outcomes
- ☐ Seek feedback where appropriate and make amendments to your plan based on new information
- ☐ Monitor the success of your project or tasks continuously and identify ways to improve
- ☐ Meet expectations and standards as communicated by your supervisor

Appendix I - Police Record Check Information for Students

Your academic placement may require you to complete a police record check depending on the nature of your responsibilities at the placement. This document provides information to help make the process run more smoothly.

The below information is referenced from the Hamilton Police Service web site and was accurate at the time of printing. For the most current information, please visit <https://hamiltonpolice.on.ca/how-to/obtain-criminal-records-check>.

There are three types of police checks for volunteering: Criminal Record Check (\$15), Criminal Record and Judicial Matters Check (\$20), and Vulnerable Sector Check (\$25). Depending on the type of volunteer work you will be doing, your host organization will advise you as to which check you need to complete and may provide you with a letter to bring to the police station.

To obtain a Police Record Check:

- Go to the Records Business Centre at the Hamilton Police Service Central Station at 155 King William Street in Hamilton (open Mon-Fri 8:30am-6:00pm),
- Fill out the appropriate form,
- Show acceptable identification (see below), and
- Pay the applicable fee (to be paid by cash, debit or credit only)

Bring any police record check letter that your placement agency or course instructor provided you with to show that your police record check is for a volunteer placement for a course and therefore less expensive than for employment, and will also distinguish which of the three police record checks is required. If you get the wrong police record check completed, your host organization may require you to complete it again, which may delay you starting in your placement and cost you for the additional record check.

Hamilton Police Service no longer accepts requests for police screening from persons residing outside the City of Hamilton. However, for students who reside temporarily in Hamilton (but your permanent residence is outside of Hamilton) this policy will be waived if you can show proof of temporary residence in Hamilton (eg. a lease agreement, a bill with your name and address on it, verification of residence on campus, etc.). For students who have no Hamilton address, you must go to the police service in the municipality where you permanently reside. The processes, policies and fees above may be different in other municipalities.

Acceptable Identification

Every applicant must have **two** pieces of identification, one of which **must** be government-issued and include all of the following: 1) applicant's name, 2) applicant's date of birth, 3) applicant's signature and 4) photo of the applicant.

Government-Issued

- Driver's License (issued by Canadian province or territory)
- Foreign Driver's License

- Canadian/Foreign Passport
- Canadian Citizenship Card/ Permanent Residence (PR) Card
- Certificate of Indian Status
- International Student Identity Card
- Firearms Acquisition Certificate (FAC)
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) Identification Card
- Federal, provincial or municipal employee identification card
- Military Family Identification Card (MFID)
- Health Card (with photo)
- Student Card (with photo)
- NEXUS Card

If you are unable to supply identification from this list, your alternative is to submit fingerprints to the RCMP for search and comparison.

A second piece of ID may include any of the following or a second from the above list:

- Birth Certificate
- Immigration Documents
- Ontario Age of Majority Card
- Employment ID (with photo)
- Baptismal Certificate
- Marriage Certificate
- Student Card (with photo)
- Vehicle Insurance or Ownership
- Utility bills or government mail with your name and current address

S.I.N. cards or credit cards are NOT accepted as forms of identification.

On-Line Police Checks

There is an option to apply for a police check online, but online screening checks may not be suitable for everyone. Please review the information below to determine if this is the right choice for you as they do not recommend the system be used by anyone who: has lived in Canada for less than one year, and/or; is under the age of 21 years, and/or; has no established personal credit history (i.e. no credit cards, bank loans, mortgage, etc.) that is required in order to authenticate your ID using this method.

To use the online solution, a \$9.95 processing / authentication fee will be added to the price of each police background check. Full information can be found at www.policesolutions.ca/checks/services/hamilton/

If you have any questions about your placement or how to obtain a police check, please contact Ruthanne Talbot, Faculty of Social Sciences, at talbotr@mcmaster.ca or 905-525-9140, ext.23382.

Appendix II – Thanking your Community Supervisor

It is important to recognize the contributions of your supervisor and the organization they work for - for the time, knowledge and mentoring they provided to you - and so we encourage students to thank them in some way.

The most formal form of recognition is a type-written thank you note, followed by a hand-written card or note, and the least formal is an email. A formal thank you note is not necessary – a card/note or email is appropriate.

If you are going to see your supervisor in person before the end of the placement, a hand-written card/note is suggested over an email. If you worked in a group, you may all wish to sign the same card and present it to your supervisor(s) from all. It is also appropriate to choose to thank your supervisor individually rather than as a group as you may have each had a different relationship with them and have specific things you would like to thank them for. There is no right or wrong, just preference.

If you will not see your supervisor in person, you may wish to mail a card/note (be certain you have the correct mailing address as this is sometimes different from their office location), or simply send a professional email.

If emailing, don't forget to use proper email etiquette – addressing it to “Dear name of supervisor” (or just name of supervisor without “Dear”), not using any email slang or short forms, and signing off “Sincerely, your name” (or just your name without “sincerely”).

The following is a sample of a typical informal “thank you”.

Please be sure to personalize your note and do not use this exact example – if everyone submitted the same letter, it won't be sincere.

Dear Jasmine,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to work with you and “name of organization” this term. It was a wonderful experience that allowed me to learn more about “topic/theme such as access to housing, the importance of community voice, etc.” as well as your organization. In working together with you on “project name/details such as the client satisfaction survey”, I have developed many great skills that I will bring forward to future opportunities. It was a pleasure working with you (and your clients/members of the community) and I feel that this experience will be invaluable as I continue my Social Sciences (or department) education and explore potential career, education and volunteer paths.

Sincerely,

Student Name

Placement Supervisor Name:

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Appendix IV - Student Declaration of Understanding

Please print and complete the form below or print from the following link:

<https://hr.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/02/Student-Declaration-of-Understanding-2.pdf>

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board or Private Insurance Coverage for Students on Unpaid Placements

Student coverage while on unpaid placement:

The government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), reimburses WSIB for the cost of benefits it pays to Student Trainees enrolled in an approved program at a Training Agency (university). Students enrolled at an Ontario postsecondary institution are eligible for Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) coverage while on placements, either required or optional, that are part of an Approved Program. ([See the Guidelines](#) for details regarding eligibility for Ministry coverage.)

MTCU also provides private insurance through Chubb Insurance (formerly ACE-INA) to students should their unpaid placement take place with an employer who is not covered under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and limited coverage where eligible placements take place outside of Ontario (international and other Canadian jurisdictions). However, students are advised to maintain insurance for extended health care benefits through the applicable student insurance plan or other insurance plan.

Please be advised that McMaster University will be required to disclose personal information relating to the unpaid work placement and any WSIB claim or Chubb claim to MTCU.

This Agreement must be completed, and signed to indicate the Student Trainee's acceptance of the unpaid work placement conditions, and a copy provided to the McMaster University placement coordinator prior to the commencement of the work placement.

Declaration:

I have read and understand that WSIB or private insurance coverage will be provided through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities while I am on an unpaid placement as part of an Approved Program.

I agree that, over the course of my placement, I will participate in and implement all safety-related training and procedures obtained from the University and the Placement Employer. I will provide the University with written confirmation that I have received safety training.

I will promptly inform my Placement Employer of any safety concerns. If these concerns are not resolved, I will contact the University's placement coordinator within my faculty and notify them of any unresolved safety concerns.

I understand that all accidents sustained while participating in an unpaid work placement must be immediately reported to the Placement Employer and my McMaster University placement coordinator. A MTCU Postsecondary Student Unpaid Work Placement Workplace Insurance Claim form must be completed and signed in the event of injury and submitted to the University placement coordinator.

I consent to the release of my personal information relating to the placement to my Placement Employer and MTCU, including address, telephone number, date of birth and social insurance number.

In the event of an injury, I also agree to maintain regular contact with the University and to provide the University with information relating to any restrictions and my ability to return to the placement.

I understand the implications and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

Student Name:

Student Signature:

Program Name:

Date:

Organization:

Total Placement Hours:

Visa Student? ☐YES ☐NO

Parent/Legal Guardian's Name (for student less than 18 yrs of age) *please print*:

Parent Signature:

Date:

Collection Notice Regarding Personal Information

McMaster University protects your privacy and Personal Information. The Personal Information requested on this form is collected under the authority of The McMaster University Act, 1976, in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act ("FIPPA"). The information will be used to communicate with the Placement Employer – for example, to confirm eligibility for the Placement or in the event of a workplace accident. Direct any questions about this collection to Privacy Office (University Secretariat) at McMaster University at 905 525 9140 x24337, privacy@mcmaster.ca or visit the website at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/privacy/>.

Appendix V - Letter to Placement Employers

Please print and complete the form below or print from the following link:

<https://hr.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/02/Letter-to-Placement-Employers-Unpaid-Placements-2.pdf>

Process for Workplace Insurance for Postsecondary Students on Unpaid Work Placements

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) has released revised *Guidelines for Workplace Insurance for Postsecondary Students of Publicly Assisted Institutions on Unpaid Work Placements* that detail the process for students on work placements who are enrolled in an approved Ontario university program.

The Government of Ontario, through MTCU, pays the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) for the cost of benefits provided to Student Trainees enrolled in an approved program at McMaster University and participating in unpaid work placements with employers who are either compulsorily covered or have voluntarily applied to have WSIB coverage.

MTCU also covers the cost of private insurance with Chubb Insurance (formerly ACE-INA Insurance) for Student Trainees enrolled in an approved program at McMaster University and participating in unpaid work placements with employers that are not required to have compulsory coverage under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act or unpaid placements out of province.

Placement Employers and Training Agencies (universities) are not required to complete and sign the online Postsecondary Student Unpaid Work Placement Workplace Insurance Claim Form for each placement that is part of the student's program of study in order to be eligible for WSIB coverage. Instead, this form only needs to be completed when submitting a claim resulting from an on-the-job injury/disease. Please note that universities will be required to enter their MTCU-issued Firm Number in order to complete the online claim form; the Placement Employer's WSIB is not impacted by claims.

The MTCU *Guidelines for Workplace Insurance for Postsecondary Students of Publicly Assisted Institutions on Unpaid Work Placements* and the claim form are posted on the Ministry's public website at: <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/publications/placement.html>

Please note that all WSIB or Chubb Insurance procedures must be followed in the event of an injury/disease.

Declaration

By signature of an authorized representative, the Placement Employer hereby agrees to the following:

That it will immediately report to the University any workplace injury or disease involving a student on an unpaid work placement. Where the Placement Employer is covered by the WSIB, the Placement Employer will comply with all WSIB reporting procedures. If the Placement Employer is not covered by the WSIB, then it will comply with the Chubb reporting procedures found in the MTCU *Guidelines for Workplace Insurance for Postsecondary Students of Publicly Assisted Institutions on Unpaid Work Placements*.

Within three days of a work related accident, Placement Employers that are covered under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act will provide to the University the incident report, as well as any other necessary information related to the accident, along with a completed Letter of Authorization to Represent the Placement Employer. The University will complete the Form 7.

The Placement Employer agrees that it will provide the Student Trainee with health and safety training, or verify that they have completed the appropriate health and safety training, and take appropriate precautions to ensure that the Student Trainee is supervised in order to protect the Student Trainee from health and safety hazards that may be encountered at the placement organization.

The Placement Employer agrees to provide written confirmation that the Student Trainee has received the appropriate health and safety training.

In the event of a claim, the Placement Employer agrees that it will review the Student Trainee's restrictions and, where possible, modify the program as required in order to accommodate the Student Trainee to facilitate return to the program.

Organization:

Date:

Title:

Signature:

Employer's organization is covered under the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board?

☐ YES ☐ NO

A signed copy of this document is to be returned to McMaster University placement coordinator, prior to the commencement of the work/education placement, and a copy is to be kept by the Placement Employer.

Appendix VI – Safety Orientation Checklist

Please print and complete the form below or print from the following link:

<https://hr.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/02/Pre-Placement-Orientation-Checklist.pdf>

SAFETY ORIENTATION CHECKLIST

Placement Employer: This checklist may be used to document health and safety orientation provided to a student(s) prior to exposure to any hazards in your workplace. This checklist, or another format documenting orientation, must be returned to the McMaster University placement coordinator.

Student Name:		
Organization Name:		
COMPLETE DURING ORIENTATION	✓	
Name and contact information for immediate supervisor and Joint Health and Safety Committee representative (JHSC) or Safety Representative		
Worker/supervisor rights and responsibilities		
Safe work procedures and operation of equipment		
Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)		
Identification of restricted or prohibited areas, tools, equipment and machinery		
Hazards in the workplace that may affect the student, how they're controlled and how to deal with them		
What to do and who to see if the student has a safety concern		
What to do when there is a fire or other emergency (e.g., evacuation procedures)		
Location of fire exits and fire extinguishers		
Location of the first aid supplies, equipment, facilities: • Names of staff responsible for first aid • How to record first aid treatment		
Procedures for reporting accidents and injuries		
Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)		
Workplace policies and procedures on, but not limited to: • Workplace Harassment • Violence prevention • Working in isolation • Smoking/Drinking/Substance abuse		
Location of other important information • Materials Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) • Joint Health & Safety Committee Minutes • Instructions for safe operation of each piece of equipment (if applicable) • Important telephone numbers • Health & safety bulletin board		
• Other hazards covered during orientation should be documented and attached on an additional sheet. • One Checklist may be used to document group student orientation sessions, however an additional sign-in sheet including student names and signatures must be attached to the Checklist.		
Supervisor Name	Signature	Date
Student Signature		Date

