

Social and Human Services

Work-Based Learning (WBL)

Introduction

The Social and Human Services Program at Gaston College incorporates **Work-Based Learning (WBL)** as a required component of the curriculum to ensure students gain meaningful, career-relevant experience. Associate degree students are required to complete two Work-Based Learning (WBL) experiences, totaling 320 hours, typically during their final two semesters before graduation. Each WBL experience requires 160 hours during the semester.

WBL is an academic program that integrates supervised professional practice with a seminar course, allowing students to apply classroom knowledge in authentic social and human services settings. Each placement is coordinated with a **college-approved site** that aligns with the student's program of study and supports both personal and professional development.

Students may be permitted to complete their WBL experience with their **current employer**, provided the employment setting and assigned responsibilities meet the requirements of the Social and Human Services Program and are approved as an appropriate WBL placement. When a student uses their current employer as the WBL site, **a maximum of 20 hours per week of their current employment may be applied toward the required 160 WBL hours for that semester**. All hours counted toward WBL must meet program and college requirements and be appropriately documented and verified.

Benefits to the Students

- Build job qualifications for future employment
- Earn college credit while working
- Increase self-confidence and reaffirm career choices
- Gain professional experience
- Network with prospective employers

Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA)

Students must comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) that sets forth regulations safeguarding client confidentiality. The information that students gather in regard to client care assignments in the Work-Based Learning setting may not be stored on any personal electronic device including but not limited to laptops, smartphones, and recording services. Failure to comply with the HIPAA privacy standards will result in disciplinary action and may result in dismissal from the program.

Student's Academic Requirement for Work-Based Learning

- Must have a 2.0 overall grade point average (GPA).
- Must meet the eligibility requirements for Work-Based Learning (WBL) in the curriculum area and be recommended for WBL.
- Department Approval Requirements are listed below.

Courses to Complete Prior to WBL 111

The courses listed below must be successfully completed before beginning your first Work-Based Learning experience

(WBL 111). Please consider these course requirements when planning your academic schedule to ensure you remain on track for WBL eligibility and program completion.

- **ACA 122 Transfer & Career Success**
- **ENG 111 Writing and Inquiry**
- **HSE 110 Intro to Human Services**
- **GRO 120 Intro to Gerontology**
- **MHA 140 Introduction to Mental Health**
- **SAB 110 Intro to Addiction and Recovery Studies**
- **BIO 110 Principles of Biology**
- **HSE 223 Counseling Theories & Skills**
- **PSY 150 General Psychology**
- **SAB 135 Addictive Process**
- **SWK 110 Introduction to Social Work**

Courses to Complete Prior to WBL 121

The courses listed above and below must be successfully completed before beginning your second Work-Based Learning experience (WBL 121). Please consider these course requirements when planning your academic schedule to ensure you remain on track for WBL eligibility and program completion.

- **ENG 112 Writing/Research in the Disc or COM 231 Public Speaking**
- **SOC 210 Introduction to Sociology**
- **DDT 110 Intellectual/Dev Disabilities**
- **HSE 123 Interviewing Techniques for Human Services**
- **HSE 220 Case Management**
- **PSY 281 Abnormal Psychology**
- **SWK 110 Introduction to Social Work**
- **WBL 111 Work-Based Learning I**

Work-Based Learning Graduation Requirement

Students must successfully complete two Work-Based Learning courses, with a minimum of 160 documented WBL hours required for each course, for a total of 320 hours, to fulfill the program's graduation requirements.

DocuSign Documents and Grading Policy

Throughout the course, students are required to complete designated Work-Based Learning (WBL) documents through DocuSign. These documents may require signatures from multiple individuals, including the student, WBL site supervisor/employer, instructor, faculty coordinator, or other designated parties.

Important: Completing a document in DocuSign does **not** automatically result in a grade. To receive credit, students must submit the **fully completed and signed DocuSign document in Blackboard** under the appropriate WBL assignment by the established due date.

Due Dates

All required DocuSign documents will have established due dates. Students are responsible for initiating the DocuSign signature process early enough to allow sufficient time for all required individuals to review and sign the document.

Students should not wait until the due date to begin the DocuSign process.

Delays Due to Pending Signatures

The Social and Human Services Program recognizes that obtaining signatures from WBL site supervisors/employers or

other required individuals may occasionally cause delays beyond the student's control.

If a DocuSign document was initiated before the due date but remains incomplete because a required signature is pending, the student must notify the instructor and provide documentation showing that the DocuSign process was initiated in a timely manner.

In these situations:

- Students will not be penalized for delays caused solely by pending signatures from other required individuals.
- Students must be able to demonstrate that they initiated the DocuSign process before the established due date.
- Students are responsible for monitoring the status of their DocuSign documents and following up with individuals whose signatures remain pending.
- Once all required signatures have been obtained, the fully completed DocuSign document must be submitted in Blackboard as soon as possible.
- Failure to initiate the DocuSign process in a timely manner may result in a late submission penalty or loss of credit.

This policy is intended to maintain student accountability while recognizing that portions of the DocuSign approval process may be outside of the student's direct control.

Work-Based Learning Experience

Students will gain hands-on experience in the social and human services field by completing supervised Work-Based Learning experiences within approved community agencies, organizations, or other appropriate professional settings.

The Social and Human Services Program requires a criminal background check as part of the WBL process. However, students should not complete a criminal background check until they have received approval and instructions to proceed with WBL.

When needed, the Work-Based Learning Department may assist with coordinating placement opportunities that align with the student's interests, career goals, and program requirements. Students are referred to the WBL Department by Social and Human Services Program Lead when they are academically eligible and approaching the appropriate point in their program of study.

WBL experiences will begin **no earlier than the student's final two semesters of the Social and Human Services Program**. Social and Human Services Program Faculty will notify students when they are being considered for a WBL referral.

Following referral and approval, students will be required to attend a **Work-Based Learning Orientation Session** provided by the WBL Department. This orientation will prepare students for the placement process, expectations, required documentation, and responsibilities associated with WBL.

Student Responsibility and WBL Eligibility

Students are responsible for monitoring their academic progress and maintaining eligibility for Work-Based Learning. Students must notify Social and Human Services Program Faculty of any changes to their academic plan or enrollment status that could affect their eligibility or anticipated WBL start date. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Withdrawing from or dropping a course
- Failing or repeating a required course
- Changing from full-time to part-time enrollment
- Making changes to the established academic plan

- Experiencing any other academic change that may delay progression or graduation

Changes to a student's academic progress may result in the WBL experience being postponed until all eligibility requirements have been met.

Students should maintain regular communication with Social and Human Services Program Faculty and the WBL Department throughout the referral, placement, and completion process to ensure all WBL requirements are completed successfully.

Criminal Background Check

The criminal background check must be conducted through Complio. The current cost is \$30 (subject to change). Once you are approved to begin the Work-Based Learning (WBL) components of the curriculum and approval has been granted, you will receive instructions to proceed with placing your order through Complio.

Students interested in completing the Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CADC) Credential, who require a separate background check (see below).

Students interested in completing the Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CADC) Credential:

Students must register with the [North Carolina Addictions Specialist Professional Practice Board](#) (NCASPPB) prior to the internship placement to allow sufficient time for the registration to be processed by the NCASPPB. This is an outside credentialing organization. Please click the link to view the details available in the [Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor Brochure](#). The NCASPPB current fees (subject to change) for the registration process include a \$25 application fee, a \$200 registration fee, and a \$38 SBI/FBI background check fee, which includes fingerprinting. Three (3) clock hours of ethics are also required for registration. You need to contact the Social and Human Services Faculty in your first year, second semester (typically Spring) to assist you with the registration process.

Gaston College Policy 5-61, Safe Student Performance in Educational Programs

APPLIES TO: Students enrolled in any course or program of study that may have a clinic, shop, lab, or field component

- A.** It is the policy of Gaston College to provide a safe and secure learning and working environment.
- B.** Students enrolled in a course or program of study are required to be able to competently and safely perform, with or without reasonable accommodations, the applicable technical standards/essential functions applicable to the course or program of study, including any standards or functions applicable to a clinic, shop, lab, and/or field setting.
- C.** Students are also required to adhere to Gaston College's Student Code of Conduct, and any ethical, industry, and/or related conduct standards set forth by an applicable professional organization or agency specifically associated with a course or program of study.
- D.** Instructors and students share in the responsibility for communicating and inquiring about technical standards/essential functions, respectively, which are applicable to a course or program of study. Instructors are expected to provide a copy of applicable technical standards/essential functions for a course and/or program of study, which should be included in a course syllabus, program of study handbook, College website, College catalog, and/or course materials.
- E.** If in an instructor's professional judgement, a student's performance and/or conduct poses a risk to the student's personal safety and/or well-being, and/or the safety and/or well-being of others, the instructor may recommend that the student be dismissed or removed from the course or program of study. Examples of conduct or performance that may be cause for recommendation for dismissal include:
 - 1. Leaving a clinical site without notifying the instructor/supervisor.
 - 2. Repeated lack of preparation in a clinical, shop, lab, or field setting.
 - 3. Demonstrating behaviors that constitute unsafe or potentially unsafe practices.
 - 4. Evidence of impairment that has the potential to jeopardize the safety of patients, clinical staff, classmates, or colleagues.
 - 5. Failure to follow course policies, agency policies, or recommendations of the instructor/supervisor.
 - 6. Fraud.
 - 7. Substantiated act or acts of physical and/or verbal abuse.
 - 8. Negligence in patient care.
 - 9. Initiating interventions or actions without approval of the instructor/supervisor.
 - 10. Demonstrating physical and/or emotional conduct that is counter to accepted standards of safe and/or professional practice, or not responding to applicable treatment or counseling within a reasonable timeframe in order to meet course or program objectives.
 - 11. Dismissal from clinical site or placement, work-based learning site, or other approved educational site.

PROCEDURE

Effective: 7/1/2026

A. Dismissal from a Course or Program of Study

1. The instructor contacts the student to set a personal meeting with at least 24 hours advance notice, and explains the purpose for the meeting is for the instructor to share his or her concerns about the student's performance and/or conduct and the possibility of dismissal.
2. At the personal meeting, the student will have the opportunity to share any relevant information related to his or her performance and/or conduct.
3. The instructor is responsible for documenting the personal meeting with the student.
4. If the instructor determines that the student's continued participation in the course or program of study would pose a serious risk to the student's personal safety and/or well-being, and/or the safety and/or well-being of others, the instructor must submit to the first-level supervisor (e.g., program chair, director, or designee) a written recommendation for dismissal that includes any relevant and justifying documentation.
5. Upon receiving the written recommendation for dismissal, the first-level supervisor contacts the instructor and student to set a personal meeting with at least 24 hours advance notice, and explains that the purpose for the meeting is to discuss the recommendation with the instructor and the student and provide an opportunity for any additional information.
6. The first-level supervisor is responsible for documenting the personal meeting with the instructor and student.
7. If first-level supervisor determines that the student's continued participation in the course or program of study would pose a serious risk to the student's personal safety and/or well-being, and/or the safety and/or well-being of others, the first-level supervisor must submit a written recommendation for dismissal to the next-level supervisor (e.g., Academic Dean for curriculum programs or the Vice-President for Economic and Workforce Development or designee for continuing education programs).
8. The next-level supervisor will review the written recommendation from the first-level supervisor, including any and all relevant information, and accept or deny the recommendation for dismissal.
9. If the next-level supervisor accepts the recommendation for dismissal, he or she will notify the student in writing of the "intent to dismiss." The intent to dismiss notification to the student will include relevant information and reasons supporting the decision, and a summary of any prior coaching, counseling, and/or advising that was given to the student. The notice of intent to dismiss shall be given to the student in-person via hand-delivery, or mailed to the student via certified mail with a return receipt requested.
10. Upon receipt of the notice of intent to dismiss, the student may appeal the decision in writing to the Vice President for Academic Affairs or designee within three business days of receipt of the notice to dismiss. A student who appeals the intent to dismiss will not be allowed to attend classes from which they have been dismissed during the appeal process. Should a student successfully appeal the dismissal decision and is reinstated into the course or program of study, the student will be provided assistance to make up missed assignments including clinical, shop, lab, or field training. The timeframe for making up missed work will be determined on a case-by-case basis on timing within the semester.

11. Upon receipt of a written appeal from the student, the Vice President for Academic Affairs or designee will review the student's written appeal and render a final decision regarding dismissal. When the Vice President or their designee completes the review, the student will be informed of the decision in writing. The decision shall be given to the student in-person via hand-delivery, or mailed to the student via certified mail with a return receipt requested. The decision of the Vice President for Academic Affairs or designee is final.

12. Students who are dismissed from a course or program may request, in writing, readmission to a future class or cohort. For consideration, students must meet all program-specific readmission policies and requirements. Students seeking readmission following dismissal for safety-related violations, including removal from a clinical site, are also required to undergo a Program Safety Review by the College's Conduct, Awareness, Response, and Encouragement (CARE) Team to determine eligibility for return. The review will evaluate the circumstances and reasons for the dismissal, the nature of the safety-related violation(s), any potential risks to the student or others, the extent of any corrective actions or supportive interventions completed by the student, and the student's ability to meet required technical standards. Readmission is further contingent upon approval by the appropriate Dean and final authorization from either the Vice President for Academic Affairs (or designee) for curriculum programs, or the Vice President for Economic and Workforce Development (or designee) for continuing education programs.

Note: Since certain courses are offered in one- or two-year sequential patterns, or only once during the sequence, a student will likely not have an opportunity to repeat a course or elect a substitute course.

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Professional Dress Code

Students participating in internships, Work-Based Learning experiences, field visits, service-learning activities, or other community-based experiences represent both Gaston College and the Social and Human Services program. Students are expected to maintain a professional appearance that demonstrates respect for clients, agency staff, and the workplace while supporting a safe and therapeutic environment.

Professional Attire

Business casual attire is the standard unless the assigned agency requires a different dress code. Appropriate attire may include:

- Dress slacks or khaki-style pants
- Collared shirts, professional blouses, or sweaters
- Professional dresses or skirts of an appropriate length
- Clean, professional footwear appropriate for the assigned work environment

All clothing must be clean, neat, in good condition, properly fitted, and appropriate for a professional setting. Students should dress as they would for a professional job interview or office environment. The following are not considered appropriate:

- Shorts
- Sweatpants, athletic wear, or exercise clothing
- Leggings or other form-fitting pants worn as primary attire
- Clothing that is excessively tight, revealing, sheer, or low-cut
- Strapless, bandeau, bra-style, or midriff-baring tops
- Graphic clothing displaying offensive language or images or promoting drug use, alcohol use, violence, discrimination, or other inappropriate content

- Flip-flops or excessively high-heeled shoes
- Clothing that may interfere with job responsibilities or create a health or safety concern

Closed-toe, low-heeled shoes may be required in residential, crisis, detoxification, healthcare, and direct-client-care environments.

Personal Grooming and Hygiene

Students are expected to maintain good personal hygiene and professional grooming. Hair, facial hair, makeup, and nails should be clean, neat, and appropriate for the assigned workplace. Strong perfumes, colognes, or other fragrances should be avoided because clients or staff may have allergies, sensitivities, or medical conditions.

Jewelry and Body Piercings

Jewelry and piercings should be kept to a professional minimum and must not interfere with communication, client interaction, or assigned duties. Large hoop earrings, excessive facial jewelry, or other items that could be grabbed, pulled, or create a safety risk are not permitted in direct-care environments. An agency supervisor may require jewelry or piercings to be removed, covered, or modified when they present a professional, health, or safety concern.

Tattoos

Students are expected to follow their Work-Based Learning (WBL) agency's policy regarding visible tattoos in the workplace. Visible tattoos may be permitted; however, tattoos containing offensive, discriminatory, violent, sexually explicit, drug-related, or otherwise inappropriate words or images must be covered while participating in program-related activities. Agencies may require additional tattoos to be covered in accordance with their workplace policies.

Identification

Students must wear their Gaston College identification badge and any agency-issued identification as directed. Identification must remain visible while the student is participating in an internship, Work-Based Learning experience, or other agency-based activities.

Agency Requirements

Students must follow both the Social and Human Services Program Professional Dress Code and the dress code of their assigned agency. If the agency's requirements are more restrictive, the agency's policy will take precedence.

Agency supervisors and Gaston College faculty may require a student to modify clothing, footwear, jewelry, piercings, grooming, or other aspects of appearance when necessary to maintain professionalism, protect confidentiality, support infection control, promote client confidence, or ensure the safety of clients, students, and staff.

Students who arrive dressed inappropriately may be asked to correct the concern before beginning or continuing their assigned duties. Time missed as a result may not count toward required Work-Based Learning or internship hours.

The guiding principle is that each student's appearance should reflect professionalism, respect, sound judgment, and a commitment to maintaining a safe and supportive environment for everyone served.