Field Placement Interview Guide

This guide is intended to help you prepare for your placement interviews. You are encouraged to bring this guide with you when interviewing. Be sure to collect all the information required for your Placement Request Form (see page 4).

Before the Interview

Know the Agency
- Look at the agency’s website. Review their mission, vision, values and program offerings
- Use Google News to scan for any recent happenings, events, publications of the agency

Professional Communication is Key
- Create a professional voicemail message for the phone number you provide to agencies
- Use your Seneca email address when emailing agencies. Ensure this email is on your resume

Practice your Interviewing Skills
- Introduce yourself in a professional manner and try to establish rapport with the interviewer(s)
- Prepare answers to common interview questions and main points you want to communicate about your skills, experience, and interests
- Be prepared to express why you are interested in doing your placement at the agency. Think about your learning goals, and how they align with the organization
- Think about why you decided to do the SSW program and what makes you ready to enter the field
- Practice by doing a mock interview with a friend, or in front of a mirror

Gather Important Information
- Bring copies of your resume and a list of 2-3 references
- Be sure to contact your references prior to ask permission
- Print and bring a copy of this guide to ensure you’ve covered all you need in the interview

Dress for Success
- Plan to wear professional attire that is appropriate for the agency’s setting
- If you are in need of professional attire, Seneca Career Services has an Interview Clothing Drive. Contact 416.491.5050 ext. 22934 for more information.

During the Interview

First Impressions Count
- Plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early. Anticipate weather, distance, traffic, etc.
- Be respectful and professional with everyone you meet. Display a confident and friendly attitude the moment you arrive. Not doing so may impact the agency’s decision to take you as a student
- Be prepared to shake hands with the interviewer(s). A smile and firm handshake will show confidence.

Body Language and Communicate clearly
- Pay attention to any “fidgety” characteristics you may have and try to minimize them
- Make eye contact with interviewer(s) when speaking or listening
- Speak slowly and avoid words such as “um” and “like”. It is acceptable to pause briefly to compose your answer
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Sell Yourself, Show Confidence

- Do not downplay any previous work/volunteer experience. Although you may not have SSW related experience per se, you can always focus on transferable skills you have gained, and how they relate to the field.
- Use concrete examples to highlight your skills and experiences.

Demonstrate the Right Attitude

- Be yourself and be honest. Sometimes students may try too hard to “stand out”, and in doing so may give the impression that they are aggressive, that they “know it all”, or may appear not open to learn. Strive for balance between readiness to enter the field with an openness to be a student and learn from the staff at the agency.
- It is okay to be nervous during and placement interview. Don’t worry if you start to stumble. It may be easier to just let them know that you are nervous as it can help break the ice for you and for them. They remember being in your shoes!
- Try to convey your excitement and interest in working with the agency. Supervisors understand that this maybe your first placement, and may look for attitude and fit, rather than extensive work experience.

Ask Questions and Finish Strong

- What would you like to know about the placement? Ask questions at the end of the interview that will help you prepare and anticipate what is to be expected at placement (roles, responsibilities, hours, use of vehicle. See below for sample questions)
- Do not ask about the agency mission and general services. It is expected that you have done your research prior to going to the agency. Instead, ask more specific questions about programs and services that demonstrate that you have done some research.
- Ask the interviewer for his/her business card and when you can expect to hear from them.
- Restate your interest in the agency and thank the interviewer(s) for meeting with you.

Sample Questions to Ask

- What field programs/services/projects are available to students to become involved with?
- What types of experiences will students be exposed to?
- What skills, experiences and/or personal characteristics does your agency look for in a student?
- What type of orientation/training is provided?
- Do you require me to have a police check completed? Any health tests?
- Are there regular opportunities for student supervision, feedback, and support?
- What are the hours of operation and what are the expectations regarding the student’s schedule?
- What would my schedule look like? Will are the expectations regarding my hours and schedule?
- Would I be working from one location or multiple locations? If yes, what are the other locations?
- What is the percentage of previous students had been offered positions by your agency?
- What is a typical day look like?
- What do you find most rewarding about working in this agency?
- What will the next steps be in the process?
Sample Questions an Agency Might Ask

- Tell me about yourself
- Tell us about what do you know about us?
- Why are you interested in this placement position?
- What previous experiences do you have that make you a competitive candidate for this field placement?
  - Agencies understand that many students have not yet worked in the field. If you do not have previous experience, then speak to your knowledge, skills, and abilities that are relevant to the agency. Remember, volunteer work is considered experience
- What qualities are you looking for in your field placement supervisor?
- Please tell us more about your placement requirements (days, times, hours, evaluation, forms, etc.)
- What are your strengths? What are your areas for improvement?
- Taking classes and completing your placement hours can be difficult, describe your support system and how you would mobilize it should you find yourself struggling during the school year? What do you do for self-care?
- Prepare yourself for future orientated questions such as:
  - What are your long-term career goals?
  - Where do you see yourself five years from now?

Behavioural Questions an Agency Might Ask

- Could you describe a difficult problem you’ve experienced and how you dealt with it?
- Describe a project for which you faced multiple deadlines, and how you handled it.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Give me an example of when you motivated others.
- Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
- Describe the most significant or creative presentation that you have had to complete.
- Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. Why was this person difficult? How did you handle working with that person?
- Tell me about a difficult situation when it was desirable for you to keep a positive attitude. What did you do?
- Give me an example of a time you had to make an important decision. How did you make the decision? How does it affect you today?
- Describe a situation in which you found that your results were not up to your professor's or supervisor's expectations. What happened? What action did you take?
- Tell us about a time that you took initiative to learn a new technique, concept or knowledge in order to improve your work performance?
- Tell us about a time when only limited resources were available to you. What did you do to maximize the resources give to you?
- Please describe for us a successful and effective team that you have been a part of. What role did you play in ensuring its success and effectiveness?
- Tell us about an important school work related goal you set for yourself. Were you successful?
- What have you done to further your knowledge/understanding about diversity or anti-oppression? How have you demonstrated your learning?
Placement Request Form

Be sure to complete the online **Placement Request Form** provided by your Field Placement Coordinator within 7 days of being accepted as a placement student by an agency. This form is required to confirm your field placement with Seneca College. Once submitted, your Field Supervisor/Agency Contact will be contacted to confirm.

To complete the Placement Request Form you will need the information below. Bring this sheet with you to your interview to ensure that the needed information is collected.

| Agency Name: | __________________________________________________________________________ |
| Agency Address: | __________________________________________________________________________ |
| City: | __________________________________________________________________________ |
| Postal Code: | __________________________________________________________________________ |
| Main Intersection of Agency: | __________________________________________________________________________ |
| Date of Interview: | __________________________________________________________________________ |
| Name of Interviewer: | __________________________________________________________________________ |
| Agency Contact/Supervisor Name: | __________________________________________________________________________ |
| Agency Contact/Supervisor Phone Number: | __________________________________________________________________________ |
| Agency Contact/Supervisor Email: | __________________________________________________________________________ |

* Clarify any placement requirements – VSS, immunizations, access to vehicle, CPR/First Aid

**Placement Role**

Please list your expected roles and responsibilities as a placement student as discussed in the interview.