



Applied Behavior Analysis Practicum Information

In addition to the required coursework, the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) requires a **supervised experience** component as part of the application process to become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) or a Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA).

To reiterate, to become certified as a BCBA or a BCaBA, applicants must complete the required coursework (e.g., Penn State's 15-credit course sequence) **AND** complete the required supervised experience hours. There are two options for obtaining supervised experience hours:

- 1) through supervised independent fieldwork
- OR
- 2) through an approved university-based practicum.

Applicants who choose to complete the experience requirement through supervised independent fieldwork must find their own supervisor (who holds BCBA certification), arrange for their own clients, and complete their experience hours independently. BCBA applicants need to accrue 1500 hours of fieldwork if they choose to do supervised independent fieldwork, while BCaBA applicants need to accrue 1000 hours.

As an alternative to supervised independent fieldwork, Penn State offers a BACB-approved university practicum. Students who enroll in the practicum will still need to identify and arrange for their own fieldwork placement. However, Penn State will provide a Ph.D.-level BCBA to supervise their experience. BCBA applicants need to accrue 1000 hours of fieldwork if they choose to enroll in a university-based practicum, while BCaBA applicants need to accrue 670 hours.

The purpose of the practicum is for you to gain experience in developing, implementing, and evaluating techniques that produce positive behavioral change in clients. Supervision will be completed at a distance via video sharing and online conferencing. Students must register for university credit and pay tuition in order to complete the practicum.

Please read below for answers to frequently asked questions about Penn State's practicum.

Where can I find additional information about the BACB's experience requirement?

You are strongly encouraged to visit the Behavior Analyst Certification Board's web site (www.bacb.com) for detailed information about the entire board certification process.

This page provides specific information about the experience requirements for BCBA applicants:
www.bacb.com/index.php?page=69

This page provides specific information about the experience requirements for BCaBA applicants:
<http://www.bacb.com/index.php?page=68>

Is the Penn State practicum required as part Penn State's certificate program?

No! Penn State's certificate program is comprised only of courses that meet the coursework requirement set forth by the BACB. The practicum is not included in the certificate programs. It is an additional option that Penn State provides for students who would like to complete their supervised experience requirement via a university-based practicum. Many students have access to a BCBA who

is willing to supervise their fieldwork. In such cases it makes sense to take the coursework from Penn State by enrolling in the certificate program and independently work with a private supervisor to obtain the supervised fieldwork hours – enrollment in the practicum is not necessary.

Do I have to be enrolled in Penn State’s certificate program in order to enroll in Penn State’s practicum?

No! We welcome students who are currently enrolled or have completed their coursework at a different institution to enroll in our practicum.

What’s the difference between supervised independent fieldwork and Penn State’s practicum?

Differences are outlined in the following table.

	Penn State’s ABA Practicum	Supervised Independent Fieldwork
Cost	Penn State’s practicum courses are graduate courses and therefore tuition is charged at the graduate tuition rate (currently \$736 per credit). The BCBA practicum requires 4 credits in fall, 4 credits in spring, and 2 credits in summer. Students who complete all of their supervised experience hours through Penn State’s practicum will pay a total of 10 credits of tuition plus applicable fees of approximately \$100 per semester. Students may be able to be reimbursed by their employer or obtain loans to cover part or all of their tuition and fees.	Fees charged by private supervisors vary greatly from free to over \$500 per hour. These fees are typically paid out of pocket by the applicant.
Required Hours	BCBA applicants need to accrue 1000 hours of fieldwork if they choose to enroll in a university-based practicum. BCaBA applicants need to accrue 670 hours of fieldwork if they choose to enroll in a university-based practicum.	BCBA applicants need to accrue 1500 hours if they choose to do supervised independent fieldwork. Five percent of the total fieldwork hours (75 hours) must be supervised directly by the applicant’s supervisor. BCaBA applicants need to accrue 1000 hours if they choose to do supervised independent fieldwork. Five percent of the total fieldwork hours (50 hours) must be supervised directly by the applicant’s supervisor.
Duration	While enrolled in a university-based practicum, applicants can accrue a maximum of 25 hours of fieldwork per week. Penn State’s practicum is structured so that students who can accrue their fieldwork hours at this rate will complete their 1000 hours of BCBA fieldwork experience in one academic year by completing 4 credits and 400 fieldwork hours during fall semester (16 weeks), 4 credits and 400 fieldwork hours during the spring semester (16 weeks), and 2 credits and 200 fieldwork hours during the summer	Applicants can accrue a minimum of 10 hours per week and a maximum of 30 hours a week for a minimum of three weeks per month. Depending on the rate of hours accrued per week, fieldwork for a BCBA applicant could be completed in one year (if accrued at the maximum rate) or may take up to four years (if accrued at the minimum rate).

	<p>session (8 weeks).</p> <p>We will work with BCaBA applicants and those who cannot accrue their fieldwork at the maximum rate of 25 hours per week to develop a schedule that meets their needs.</p>	
Placement	<p>Students must identify and arrange for their own clients with whom to work. Penn State will not arrange for a placement for students enrolled in the practicum.</p>	<p>Applicants must identify and arrange for their own clients with whom to work.</p>
Supervisor Experience	<p>Penn State's practicum supervisor is a Ph.D. and BCBA with over five years of experience providing supervision and over 10 years of experience in the field. She holds a professor position at Penn State, is skilled in guiding discussions via distance education technologies, and is bound by university policies on ethical and professional conduct.</p>	<p>The experience of private supervisors varies greatly. Don't hesitate to schedule an interview with potential supervisors and be sure to ask for a resume and references.</p>
Format / Structure	<p>Penn State's practicum is designed as a graduate-level course conducted using distance communication technologies. There are two pieces to the practicum: 1) the academic component and 2) the fieldwork component.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The academic component aligns with current course topics in the certificate program coursework to further enhance understanding and assimilation of principles and procedures for effective behavior management. As students work through a concept in the ABA courses, they will apply that concept in practicum and receive feedback. The practicum instructor will provide assignments to help students apply and use the information learned in the coursework. Specific focus is placed on study skills for the BCBA exam. A syllabus is provided which outlines topics, assignments, and a grading scale to help guide students through the practicum. 2) The fieldwork component requires students to submit videos of themselves working with their clients so the supervisor can observe and provide feedback. <p>The format for course meetings rotates between group conferences and one-on-one meetings between student and supervisor. Group conferences promote collaboration with peers, improve presentation skills, and facilitate discussion. Individual meetings are focused on the specific needs of the student.</p>	<p>Organization and format of independent supervision varies greatly. Very few private supervisors provide a syllabus, schedule, guided discussion, or exam study skills.</p>

When can I start accumulating hours toward the supervised experience requirement?

You cannot start accumulating experience hours until you have begun the coursework necessary to meet the BACB coursework requirements. Therefore, you can take Penn State's ABA courses and the ABA practicum simultaneously if you'd like, but you cannot enroll in the practicum before enrolling in a coursework sequence either at Penn State or elsewhere.

How many hours of supervised experience are required for certification?

Applicants for BCBA certification must complete 1500 hours of supervised independent fieldwork **OR** 1000 hours of university practicum. Applicants for BCaBA certification must complete 1000 hours of supervised independent fieldwork **OR** 670 hours of university practicum.

Can I mix university-based practicum with supervised independent fieldwork?

Yes. However you can accrue experience in only one category at a time. Please see the BACB web site for additional information.

How many supervised experience hours can I earn in Penn State's practicum?

While enrolled in a university-based practicum, applicants can accrue a maximum of 25 hours of fieldwork per week. Penn State's practicum is structured so that students who accrue their fieldwork hours at this maximum rate will complete their 1000 hours of supervised fieldwork in **one academic year** by completing 4 credits and 400 fieldwork hours during fall semester (16 weeks), 4 credits and 400 fieldwork hours during the spring semester (16 weeks), and 2 credits and 200 fieldwork hours during the summer session (8 weeks).

I don't think I will be able to accrue 400 hours of fieldwork during a 16-week semester. Can I still register for the practicum?

In an ideal situation students will log 400 fieldwork hours during their first practicum, 400 hours during their second, and then 200 hours during a summer practicum to complete their 1000 hours. However, some students may find it difficult to log 400 hours in a semester for a variety of reasons (e.g., illness, fewer clients than expected, job change, etc.). In these cases, students can still enroll in the practicum and just log fewer hours (e.g., 300 hours in their first, 300 in their second, and 200 in a third). The student will then need to register for additional practica to complete their 1000-hour requirement.

Who arranges for my fieldwork sites and clients?

Penn State will provide a supervisor for everyone who enrolls in the practicum. However, you must identify and arrange for your own site and clients to fulfill your fieldwork hours. You will also need to secure the necessary authorizations from your clients and/or their parents in regards to video recording. Sites and clients must be approved by your Penn State supervisor; approval is based on BACB guidelines.

What kind of fieldwork is required?

Regarding fieldwork, the BACB states:

Appropriate experience activities include:

- 1. Conducting assessment activities related to the need for behavioral interventions,*
- 2. Designing, implementing, and monitoring behavior analysis programs for clients,*
- 3. Overseeing the implementation of behavior analysis programs by others,*
- 4. Other activities normally performed by a behavior analyst that are directly related to behavior analysis such as attending planning meetings regarding the behavior analysis program, researching the literature related to the program, talking to individuals about the program; plus any additional activities related to oversight of behavioral programming such as behavior analyst supervision issues, or evaluation of behavior analysts' performance.*
The supervisor will determine if activities qualify.

Examples of activities that are not appropriate as experience activities include: attending meetings with little or no behavior analytic content, providing interventions that are not based in behavior analysis, doing non-behavior analytic administrative activities, or any other activities that are not directly related to behavior analysis.

Regarding appropriate clients, the BACB states:

Clients may be any persons for whom behavior analysis services are appropriate. However, the applicant may not be related to the client or the client's primary caretaker. Applicants must work with multiple clients during the experience period.

If you have a question about whether your prospective fieldwork will be acceptable, please contact Dr. Dana Garner (aba.garner@gmail.com).

How will my Penn State supervisor observe my fieldwork?

You will record via video approximately 30 minutes of direct service delivery each week. You will send the video to your supervisor who will provide feedback via a one-on-one phone call, videoconference, or e-mail. You will need to secure the necessary authorizations from your clients and/or their parents in regards to video recording.

Will I meet with my Penn State supervisor?

Yes, you will meet with your supervisor and classmates at least once per week throughout the practicum. The format for course meetings rotates between group videoconferences and one-on-one meetings between student and supervisor. Group conferences promote collaboration between students, improve presentation skills, and facilitate group discussion. Individual meetings are focused on the specific needs of the student. All meetings will use distance communication technologies so that you will **not** need to travel to meet with your supervisor.

What are the technology requirements for participating in the ABA practicum?

You will need a computer with a high speed, direct internet connection, a web cam, headphones, and a microphone (built-in or external).

Do I earn university credit for the ABA practicum?

Yes. The ABA practicum is a graduate course for which you will earn graduate credits. Your credits will appear on your graduate transcript.

What is the cost for the ABA practicum?

The ABA practicum is a graduate course. As such, tuition will be charged at the graduate tuition rate, which is currently \$736 per credit.

How can I register for the ABA practicum?

You can register for the practicum online via eLion or by calling World Campus Student Services at 800-252-3592.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

Please contact Dr. Dana Garner. Dr. Garner serves as our professor and supervisor for the ABA practicum. You can reach her via e-mail at aba.garner@gmail.com. She is happy to answer any questions you might have regarding the practicum.