

STUDENT HANDBOOK

FIELD

OBSERVATION

PROGRAM

2025 – 2026

Introduction

The purpose of the Field Observation Program is to provide students with the opportunity to observe established health care practitioners in their private clinical practice. Field Observation hours are completed during the first year of the Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine Program of Study. The Field Observation Program allows students to gain early clinical experience prior to starting their Clinical Clerkships during their third and fourth years.

Educational Activities

The educational activities of the Field Observation Program are to:

- Observe a variety of doctor-patient communication styles
- Observe diverse practice styles
- Observe a variety of therapeutic modalities
- Observe a variety of practice management techniques
- Observe the appearance of varied clinical pathologies
- Recognize skills/strategies for developing patient rapport, increasing patient compliance, and encouraging return visits
- Gain an understanding of how a physician handles difficult patient encounters
- Develop an understanding of therapeutic interventions prescribed by the physician
- Develop an understanding of business strategies for creating a successful practice
- Observe front office procedures including patient services
- Complete a reflective journal as a future naturopathic physician

Eligibility Requirements

Students must meet the following requirements to be eligible to earn Field Observation credit:

- Successfully complete CLPR 5030.
- Ensure all records are up to date with the Records Coordinator.

Field Observation Requirements

All students are required to complete:

- 44 hours of observation in private practice setting
- Submit all associated forms and assignments

All Field Observation hours must be completed with a Naturopathic Doctor (ND), Medical Doctor (MD), Osteopathic Doctor (DO), or Doctor of Chiropractic (DC) who is practicing in a licensed state.

Registration Process

- Students are registered for Field Observation credit hours through the Registrar's Office by the Offsite Experience Manager.
- The Field Observation Coordinator and Offsite Experience Manager are responsible for assigning students to specific Field Observation rotation sites.
- ND Students must be scheduled with Mentoring Physicians by the Field Observation Coordinator or Offsite Experience Manager to receive credit for CLTR 6004.01.

Professional and Ethical Expectations of N.D. Students

1) General Expectations

- Certain codes of behavior and ethics are expected and enforced in the training of health care professionals. The student's behavior and demeanor must conform to the Mentoring Physician's needs and preferences. It is the student's responsibility to meet those needs and preferences.
- Students are covered by Sonoran University's professional malpractice liability insurance for Field Observation only. This means that students are only allowed to observe and may **NOT** participate in the examination, diagnosis, or treatment of the patient. Students may **NOT** participate in any IV or acupuncture treatment.
- Students are not to give advice, comment on treatment protocol, or offer unsolicited suggestions to patients or physicians.
- Students should refrain from asking questions in the presence of a patient. Questions may be asked respectfully at a time when the student is alone with the physician.
- Students should refrain from taking notes in the presence of patients unless permission is granted by the Mentoring Physician in advance.
- Sonoran University email should be checked daily. If for any reason you can no longer access this email, please contact IT promptly.
- Check CANVAS announcements and complete pre-requisite forms prior to first day of shadowing.

2) Attendance and Punctuality

- Students are expected to arrive at the Field Observation site on time for their scheduled observation.
- In case of absence due to an illness or emergency, the student must notify the physician's office **AND** the Field Observation Coordinator as soon as possible. Any absence due to an illness requires a physician's note of explanation and must be discussed with the Field Observation Coordinator.
- In communications to both the Mentoring Physician and the Field Observation Coordinator please include:
 - a. The date of your absence
 - b. The time you are scheduled to attend and will be absent

- c. Reference to evidence (e.g., a note from a physician)
 - d. Your anticipated return date
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- The Off-Site Clinical Experience Manager should receive both an email **AND** phone call detailing the reason for the absence.
 - If a student fails to notify the Mentoring Physician AND the Off-Site Clinical Experience Manager, the absence will be considered unexcused and may result in a failing grade for the Field Observation Program.

3) Professional Dress Code

- While on a Field Observation rotation, students should observe the same dress code delineated in the Clinical Handbook for all Sonoran University Clinical Clerkships.
- Professional dress is described as a reserved, dignified, polished appearance. Students should avoid flashy or inappropriate dress to promote a professional environment. Solid dark colored scrubs or business attire may be acceptable pending on practice.
- Photo IDs are to be worn on the first day of observation and at the discretion of the Mentoring Physician thereafter.
- Scents and perfumes are not allowed because of environmentally sensitive and asthmatic patients.
- Personal hygiene must be appropriate for close contact (i.e., deodorant must be used, nails must be short and clean.)
- All body piercings, except for small earrings, should be removed.
- Tattoos should be appropriately concealed.
- No denim, shorts, tight clothing, spandex, leggings, t-shirts, crop tops (midriff or half shirts), spaghetti straps, gaping sleeveless shirts or sleeveless dresses that reveal undergarments, are to be worn at the clinical site.
- Students with gross inadequacies in appearance may be directed by the Mentoring Physician, the physician's management staff, or the Off-Site Clinical Experience Manager to correct these immediately, and the student will not be permitted to be present at a Field Observation site until they do so.
- Students missing a Field Observation experience due to appearance will be sent home and will not receive Field Observation hours for the time missed. The absence will be considered unexcused, the student will be required to make up an additional 8 hours of Field Observation time, and the student may also be subject to a failing grade for the Field Observation Program.

Note: Dress Code standards must be upheld at all Field Observation sites.

4) Professional Code of Behavior:

- Patients, peers, physicians, residents, and staff are to be treated in a professional and courteous manner. All physicians must be addressed as doctors, and their last name in front of patients.
- If granted permission to address a patient, students should ask whether the patient prefers to be addressed on a first or last name basis.
- Students are expected to comply with OSHA regulations.
- Students are expected to comply with HIPAA regulations.
- Students are expected to ask permission before entering areas of the Field Observation site (e.g., behind the front desk, charting room, lab area, or dispensary room.)
- Students are not to remain at any clinical training site after being excused by the Mentoring Physician, or when they have completed their observation hours.
- Unprofessional conduct will result in any or all the following:
 - a. Failing grade in the Field Observation Program
 - b. Remediation through Clinical Skills Development Session (CSDS Disciplinary action, up to, and including dismissal from the Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine Program

5) Substance Abuse Policy

- Students are required to adhere to the Substance Abuse Policy outlined in the course catalog.
- All students must complete and pass a mandatory drug test prior to any clinical training and are subjected to random testing throughout their clinical training.

6) Code of Conduct Violations

Sonoran University is required by law to report unprofessional student conduct that occurs during clinical training to the State of Arizona Naturopathic Physicians Medical Board. Any reported individual is subject to disciplinary sanctions from the board, up to and including, revocation of the student's Clinical Training Certificate.

Students are subject to disciplinary action for the following reasons, but not limited to:

- Acting without permission from the attending physician on issues of patient care.
- Unsatisfactory clinical evaluations.
- Unprofessional conduct as defined by the Arizona Revised Statutes and/or in the Sonoran University College Catalog and/or as stated below:
 - Sexual misconduct
 - Inappropriate remarks

- Inappropriate or inadequate patient draping
- Breaking patient confidentiality
- Violations of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- Violations of Occupational Safety Health Act (OSHA)
- Practicing medicine without a license

7) Practicing Medicine without a license

In the State of Arizona, practicing naturopathic medicine without a license involves the diagnosis or treatment of any patient by an unsupervised naturopathic medical student or any other unlicensed person where money may or may not be exchanged. Sonoran University graduates are not allowed to use the title “Naturopathic Physician” or “Doctor” until they have been granted a license to practice naturopathic medicine by the State of Arizona.

Naturopathic medical students are held to a higher standard than the general population. It is understood that naturopathic medical students must practice skills to become minimally competent for graduation. The practice of skills such as history taking or homeopathic case taking, are less concerning than the practice of skills such as digital rectal exams, gynecologic examinations, minor surgery, injections, manipulative therapies, and IVs. The difference lies within the relative risk to the public. For example, there is higher risk to the public with the practice of an IV as compared with the risk to the public with the practice of taking a history.

Additionally, the quality of the educational experience is of the utmost importance. In general, supervision of skills enhances the quality of the learning experience.

8) Definitions:

ARS 32-1501

13. "Direct supervision" means that a physician who is licensed pursuant to this chapter or chapter 13, 17 or 29 of this title

a) Is physically present and within sight or sound of the person supervised and is available for consultation regarding procedures that the physician has authorized and for which the physician remains responsible.

b) Has designated a person licensed pursuant to this chapter or chapter 13, 17 or 29 of this title to provide direct supervision in the physician's absence.

23. "Naturopathic medical student" is a person who is enrolled in a course of study at an approved school of naturopathic medicine.

24. "Naturopathic medicine" is medicine as taught in approved schools of naturopathic medicine and in clinical, internship, preceptorship and postdoctoral training programs approved by the board and practiced by a recipient of a degree of Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine licensed pursuant to this chapter.

27. "Practice of naturopathic medicine" is a medical system of diagnosing and treating diseases, injuries, ailments, infirmities and other conditions of the human mind and body including by natural means, drugless methods, drugs, nonsurgical methods, devices, physical, electrical, hygienic and sanitary measures and all forms of physical agents and modalities.

Grading Criteria for Field Observation Hours

To earn credit for the Field Observation Program, a student must complete the following:

- 1) 44 hours of observation with an approved Mentoring Physician.
- 2) Comply with the Professional and Ethical expectations
- 3) Comply with the Attendance Policy.
- 4) Complete all required forms.

Clinical Grading System

- Satisfactory = Pass/Credit Earned
- Unsatisfactory= Fail/No Credit Earned

Failing the Field Observation Program

- A failing grade of unsatisfactory, “U,” can seriously affect a student’s academic progress.
- Upon receiving a failing grade for the Field Observation Program, the student is required to attend one of the Clinical Skills Development Sessions (CSDS) for remediation.
- The entire Field Observation Program must then be repeated and may be repeated one time only.
- If a second “U” is received for the repeated program, the student may be academically dismissed from the Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine Program.

Form FO6004 – 1 ND Student Acknowledgement and Agreement

The Field Observation Student Handbook of the Sonoran University of Health Sciences (Sonoran University) is published to provide students with information about the Field Observation Program.

The Sonoran University Student Handbook does not constitute a contract.

Sonoran University reserves the right to make changes in terms, conditions, regulations, rules, policies set forth in this publication at any time, and without notice, however, Sonoran University will try to communicate those changes with reasonable notice to all interested parties.

Students are responsible for understanding and complying with all policies and procedures contained in the Student Handbook and in other publications distributed by Sonoran University. This handbook (2025-2026 CLTR 6004.01) supersedes all previous editions.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Field Observation Program Student Handbook and that I am responsible for reading and understanding all the information contained within this handbook.

ND Student Name (Please Print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

(A signed copy of this Acknowledgment and Agreement form is stored in Google Docs and is a prerequisite to the forms required before access to CANVAS assignments.)