



Public Health Internship Handbook

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PREFACE

This handbook is intended to assist Public Health students in planning and completing their internship experience. By using this handbook, in conjunction with input from their advisors, university supervisors and the Internship Coordinator, students increase the likelihood of securing and completing a beneficial internship. A successful internship, in turn, assists in the transition from full-time student to public health professional.

Roles and responsibilities of the student, the university, and cooperating agencies are discussed in this handbook. Such information is designed to make the internship experience a successful working relationship for all participants. Students are fully responsible for all information provided in this handbook.

INTERNSHIP OVERVIEW

The Public Health Internship, occurring during a student's final semester at Towson University, is a practical public health experience in a community setting (Appendix A). *The internship is a full-time (approximately 40 hours per week, depending on organization where intern is placed), 14-week (length may vary depending upon specific academic calendar) experience with work hours and assignments established by the agency of the student's internship.* Students earn 12 credits through the internship.

All interns are expected to follow the hours and schedule of their placement agencies. Therefore, students completing spring internships do not have spring vacations based on the university schedule. Rather, spring interns follow the work schedule of their internship placement. Other holidays (e.g., Thanksgiving) likewise are contingent on the schedule of the placement agency.

The experience is full-time, therefore, students may NOT enroll in concurrent coursework. In rare cases, students may obtain prior written approval from the Department Chairperson *and* their agency supervisor. Approvals must be obtained no later than one semester (excluding summer) prior to the intended internship experience.

The Internship in Public Health is graded as *satisfactory* or *unsatisfactory*. To achieve a *satisfactory* grade, students must complete requirements specified below. Students must also conduct themselves in a manner consistent with Towson University's Code of Conduct (<https://www.towson.edu/studentaffairs/policies/conduct.html>) and the Department of Health Sciences Professional Behavior Policy.

In addition, students are expected to work with their agency supervisor to establish objectives for the internship and demonstrate appropriate skills and progress in meeting those objectives. To the extent possible, the experience will incorporate opportunities for students to display their abilities in program planning, evaluation, communication (written and verbal), understanding group process, and leadership. Students will complete all assignments required by the agency and the university in a professionally appropriate and timely manner.

ELIGIBILITY FOR INTERNSHIP

Students who successfully complete all requirements and procedures for the Public Health Internship will be considered for an internship placement. Applicants for the internship must be in good academic, financial, and disciplinary standing with the university. Failure to uphold any of those standards will preclude a student's registration for the Internship in Public Health.

Students will only be placed with approved agencies. Students who desire placements in an unapproved agency must initiate the appropriate review process at least two full semesters (excluding summer) before their intended internship. Ask the Internship Coordinator for more information about this process.

Internships occur during fall or spring semesters. In rare cases, a summer internship may be granted in the case of documented student hardship. Documentation must be on official letterhead and in original form (e.g., medical issue, acceptance to graduate school, or offer of employment). All materials must be submitted to the Department Chairperson, who will consider and potentially approve requests for a summer internship.

No courses of any kind (e.g., Core Requirements, Public Health requirements, or courses applicable to minor) may be taken by interns during the semester of the internship. In rare cases, an exception may be granted and requires prior written permission from the Department Chairperson and agreement of the agency supervisor. Permissions for concurrent coursework must be secured at least one semester (excluding summer) before the proposed internship.

The department understands that interns may find it necessary to seek outside, paid employment during their internship experience. The department has no policies prohibiting such employment, but interns may not leave their internship placements early or arrive late because of outside commitments. Outside employment also may not interfere with any weekend or evening hours expected of the intern.

STUDENT ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The internship experience is an opportunity for students to apply their undergraduate coursework to the realities of a public health setting and to further develop established and new skills essential to such work. The student is thus expected to function as a staff member of the internship placement.

The student intern works full-time as defined by the placement agency (approximately 40 hours per week). Deviation from this policy must be discussed and approved by both the agency and university faculty supervisors. Beyond adhering to the placement's work week, the student intern is expected to honor all policies and procedures that apply to professional and administrative staff members of the placement, including dress code policies.

Students may be required to meet additional requirements specific to the internship agency (e.g., securing additional insurance, a criminal background check, and specific immunizations). It is the student's responsibility to determine whether agency-specific requirements must be fulfilled prior to the internship to assure a timely and seamless start to the experience.

Students are responsible for expenses incurred to comply with the agency's dress code policy. Questions about the agency's dress code should be discussed at the time of the student's interview with the prospective placement. The agency may choose to reimburse the intern for some or all internship-incurred expenses. Students cannot expect the internship agency to pay or reimburse the student as they are considered part of the intern's responsibilities.

Absence

Both the university and the cooperating agency will work with students to honor their religious commitments. It is the student's responsibility to discuss religious holidays that entail absence from the internship with both the agency and university supervisors, and to do so within the first week of the student's placement.

If ill and not reporting to work, it is the student's responsibility to call the agency supervisor as early as possible on the day of the absence (or the day before the absence). The student also must report all absences to the university faculty supervisor, in addition to communicating with the agency supervisor. *Students who miss work for three consecutive work days or more must submit a doctor's note (original document on office letterhead; fax or copy will not be accepted) to both the agency and the university faculty supervisors on the day the student returns to the internship.* To the extent possible, time lost due to illness will be made up before the last day of the internship.

When accommodation for missed time does not occur within the internship schedule, the student will be required to remain in the placement until providing service equivalent to the missed hours. In the event of inclement weather, interns will maintain office hours consistent with the agency's policy. In the case of extreme weather conditions (e.g., when offices are closed for a full week due to snow, hurricane conditions, etc.), the Internship Coordinator will work with both the student and the agency to assure adherence with university policies and expectations.

Requirements

Interns may complete assignments including (but not limited to): needs assessment of the placement agency's population; development of public health objectives for a specific community health program; development, implementation, and evaluation of strategies to address an identified need; preparation of educational materials (e.g., Power Point, brochures, displays, pamphlets) appropriate to a specific health program or population; offering classes and/or presentations for clients of the placement agency.

To successfully complete the internship experience, it is the student's responsibility to fulfill each of the following requirements and to do so in a manner consistent with policies and schedules provided to the student:

PRIOR TO INTERNSHIP

- Read this handbook carefully to understand all internship expectations;
- Attend departmental pre-internship meetings;
- Submit mandatory documentation to establish academic preparedness for internship;
- Submit Internship Site Request Form;
- Complete résumé and cover letter approved in HLTH 430 or by the Career Center;
- Sign up to interview with selected internship sites;
- Tailor cover letters for applications to selected sites;
- Arrange and complete interviews with prospective internship placements;
- Submit completed Internship Placement Agreement; and
- Obtain criminal background check, clinical requirements, etc. specific to agency requirements.

DURING INTERNSHIP

- Adhere to all policies and procedures outlined in this handbook;
- Read and follow the syllabus for the internship (i.e., HLTH 422);
- Arrange on-site conference with agency and university supervisors;
- Facilitate completion of the agency supervisor's student evaluations;
- Submit weekly memos via Blackboard to the university supervisor;
- Maintain a weekly log of hours worked, obtain the agency supervisor's confirming signature, and submit the signed log via Blackboard at the end of the internship;
- Participate in mandatory on-campus seminars (Students who miss one or more seminars are at risk of failing internship. Students are expected to report to their internship for the part of the business day during which the seminar is not conducted.);
- Visit HLTH 315 or HLTH 430 for one full class period to discuss internship experiences with future interns;

- Submit an orientation report to the university supervisor via Blackboard at a time specified by the university supervisor;
- Complete and submit two internship projects to the university supervisor via the course Blackboard site by a specified due date;
- Prepare a 48"x 36" poster describing one of the internship projects; this poster will be displayed at an internship event (e.g., Internship Conference, Career Day, etc.) as indicated by the Internship Coordinator. More information and poster templates available here: <https://www.towson.edu/technology/studentservices/printing/templates.html>
- Complete and submit Intern Evaluations.

HEALTH SCIENCES DEPT. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the department's responsibility to confirm that courses required in the major prior to the internship are offered on a regular and accessible basis. Upon the student's participation in the pre-internship meeting and provision of documents specified at that time, the department will verify that the student has successfully completed required coursework. No internship will be allowed in the absence of such a review. Students will be ineligible for internship if their academic record and/or behavior are not in compliance with all university and department requirements and policies. The department is also responsible for approval of all agencies in which internships may occur.

The department's Internship Coordinator will assist students with selecting an internship placement to maximize the likelihood of expanding their career goals and professional competence. Once students are cleared for internship and have selected placements of interest, they will reach out to the prospective agency supervisor to establish the site's interest in and willingness to supervise the prospective intern. To the extent possible, the proposed agency supervisor will interview the student at least two months prior to the start of the proposed internship. Once the student and placement agency agree to the placement, the supervisor will complete a Placement Agreement and the student will submit this agreement to the Internship Supervisor.

The Internship Coordinator will conduct orientation meetings for students in both the pre- internship and internship phases of their program. At those sessions, the department will supply students with information about requirements, schedules, and other matters related to internship placement.

Once the internship experience is underway, the department will provide ongoing assistance to both the student and the agency supervisor. Each student will be assigned a university faculty supervisor whose responsibility is to provide oversight, support, and assistance to both the student and placement agency. Concerns about appropriateness of internship placements or problems encountered on-site will be directed to the university faculty supervisor. If warranted, the department's Internship Coordinator will work with the student, the agency, and the university faculty supervisor to address problems or, on rare occasions, to relocate the student. Any change in internship

placement must be approved and handled by the Internship Coordinator.

The student's university faculty supervisor, the agency supervisor, and the student will meet as frequently as necessary to provide ongoing and coordinated supervision. The department requires a minimum of one visit for all internships, which occurs at roughly the mid-point of the experience (week 6 or 7 of the semester); other visits may be conducted at the discretion of the faculty and site supervisor at a mutually convenient time. It is at the discretion of the agency supervisor, student, and university faculty supervisor whether to conduct meetings at the internship site or at another mutually acceptable location. It is at the discretion of all parties to arrange additional meetings. If it is determined that more meetings among the student, agency supervisor, and university faculty supervisor are necessary to ensure student success.

The department further assumes responsibility for providing on-campus seminars (on average, three or four per semester) for continued communication with and professional development of Public Health Interns. Such seminars may include, but are not limited to, activities such as mock interviews, professional networking, and student presentations of experiences. Unless invited directly, agency supervisors are not expected to attend these seminars.

Finally, the department is responsible for overseeing all evaluation activities of the internship experience. The Internship Coordinator will discuss the evaluation instruments (forms available on Blackboard) with students at the first internship seminar. University faculty supervisors will be responsible for ensuring that on-site supervisors' evaluations of students are appropriately reviewed and uploaded to the course Blackboard site. The first evaluation will be performed by the agency supervisor midway through the student's experience. This evaluation will comprise one focal point for the university faculty supervisor's mid-semester on-site visit. A second evaluation will occur at the internship's conclusion and will be uploaded to the course Blackboard site. Additional meetings and/or telephone conversations among the university faculty supervisor, agency supervisor, and student will be held as needed. Based on the agency supervisor's evaluations and university faculty supervisor's observations, the university faculty supervisor will submit a final grade of *satisfactory* or *unsatisfactory* for the student. All required documents (e.g., evaluation forms, student reports, etc.) must be received

via Blackboard by the university faculty supervisor and/or Internship Coordinator before a grade will be entered for the student. Failure to submit mandatory materials by required deadlines will result in a grade of *unsatisfactory* for the internship.

COOPERATING AGENCY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

To be an approved internship site, an agency must submit a signed *Letter of Agreement* or *approved contract*. This document establishes a relationship between the agency and the Department of Health Sciences, and indicates the cooperating agency's agreement to the roles and responsibilities as outlined in this handbook. All approved placement agencies provide public health experiences at a level consistent with the capabilities of a Bachelor's degree-prepared student (see Appendix B for bachelor-level competencies according to the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc.). Placement agencies agree to provide the student with direct supervision by a staff member who has both educational and professional experiences appropriate to the position. The agency supervisor must have worked at the internship placement agency for at least one year.

The cooperating agency's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Provide the department with up-to-date descriptions of the placement site and internship expectations;
- Maintain an active *affiliation agreement* and ensure the agency can meet all terms specified in the *agreement*. In addition, the agency must notify the Internship Coordinator if additional terms must be met by the university, student, and/or faculty;
- Provide prospective interns with the opportunity for an on-site interview in the semester prior to internship. In this meeting, the agency will inform the prospective intern of the expected work days/week, reimbursement policies, mandatory immunizations, travel expectations, requirements regarding authorization for employment in the United States, parking, criminal background checks, drug screens, and other details specific to the internship placement;
- Provide appropriate guidance and professional supervision for the intern. The on-site supervisor will orient the student to the agency. To the extent possible, agencies will help the student obtain additional opportunities for learning and/or will work with students to form liaisons with other agencies;

- Provide an array of professional experiences. To the extent possible, the cooperating agency will identify opportunities for the student to perform tasks independently as well as ones in which the student functions as part of a working group;
- Maintain regular communication with the student's faculty supervisor and, as warranted, Internship Coordinator. This communication includes the agency supervisor's i) participation in a minimum of one onsite visit with the student and university faculty supervisor, and ii) completion of internship evaluations;
- Assure appropriate work environment. The agency will provide physical facilities necessary to accommodate students (e.g., desk space, telephone, computer); and
- Confirm reimbursement policy. Consistent with agency practice, students will be reimbursed for job-related travel or other expenses according to agency policies. If no agency policy exists to reimburse for mileage, meeting attendance, parking, etc., the cooperating agency will inform prospective interns during their interview.

Each internship placement differs in the attributes/skills that should be performed/observed within a student's first weeks on site, and the attributes/skills that are important later in a student's internship experience. In constructing the intern's work plan, the department asks that each agency supervisor and student work together to identify the attributes/skills expected to be observable and evaluated in the student's midterm evaluation and also during the latter half of the student's placement.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Definitions Of Terms

Agency supervisor: individual designated by the placement agency with experience and educational background appropriate to oversee intern activities; has been oriented to the Public Health internship program and its requirements; provides daily supervision and guidance to intern within the agency and serves as the person to whom the intern reports

Intern: undergraduate in Public Health, must have completed mandatory coursework and all other requirements pursuant to the major; a full-time staff member of the internship placement agency for the duration of internship

Internship: full-time experience for academic credit in a public health setting intended as the capstone to undergraduate education in Public Health

Internship Coordinator: faculty member designated by the Health Sciences Department to oversee intern placement process; responsible for interns' continuing education, changes in placements, or other administrative matters related to the internship program; conducts all pre-internship and internship seminars; assigns and works with university faculty supervisors to confirm interns' successful performance and to maintain current information about placements; secures new placement sites for interns

University supervisor: faculty member designated by the Health Sciences Department to maintain contact with interns and their agency supervisors, and to assure students' completion of university requirements; works with Internship Coordinator to assure the department's maintenance of effective internship experiences; serves as a liaison for the department, the student, and the agency supervisor, as needed

Appendix B: NCHEC Competencies For Health Educators

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HEALTH EDUCATION CREDENTIALING, INC.

The 2020 Competencies for Health Educators may be accessed at the following link:
https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2251/areas_of_responsibilitie_jwedit.pdf

Please refer to these competencies when proposing and preparing your internship projects.