

The UNCG – Department of Public Health Education MPH Internship: Guidelines for Preceptors



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GREENSBORO

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The UNCG MPH Internship

What Is An Internship?

An internship is a structured, planned, and supervised professional experience for which the student receives academic credit. The well designed internship should engage students in a unique learning relationship involving a three-way partnership between the student, the site preceptor, and the academic coordinator. The internship should provide the student with a critical learning opportunity that links academic knowledge with practical experience while providing a beneficial service to the precepting organization. By carefully applying the graduate level skills of the MPH program into an experiential process the internship provides a different experience than volunteer or paid work. Although an internship may allow students the opportunity to build professional contacts and/or be paid, that is not its primary purpose. Neither is the purpose of the internship to provide “cheap” labor to often under-staffed or under-resourced agencies. And although an internship is typically practice-based, at its core it is an educational experience and should therefore be designed to contribute to the student’s intellectual and ethical growth.

Students plan their internship in the fall during a program planning course (HEA 648) and implement their internship during the subsequent spring semester (HEA 650). Internships are a minimum of 180 hours.

Key characteristics of an MPH internship:

1. It is an educational experience.
2. The work/activities are designed to provide both student learning and benefits to the agency.
3. It is guided by the student’s personal learning goals.
4. It is planned. The plan consists of program goals and objectives, activities/strategies for achieving these goals and objectives; a timeline and budget (monetary and non-monetary); and an evaluation plan assessing how well the student’s achieved both the program and the personal learning goals.
5. It is situated within an appropriate agency, supervised by qualified agency personnel.
6. It involves ongoing interaction between the student and a faculty internship coordinator.
7. It involves student reflection and evaluation.
8. It involves graduate level work and assessment.

Internship Possibilities

While exposure to a professional work environment is one likely outcome of the internship experience it should not be the basis of a graduate level internship. We encourage our students to approach the MPH internship as an opportunity to apply their new skills to the needs of organizations fulfilling a public health function. We repeatedly encourage students to use this experience as an opportunity to leave an agency better off due to their internship efforts. Internship activities could cover many aspect of the profession but should specifically target one or more of the recognized *Areas of Responsibility* and three or more *Competencies/Sub-competencies* of the Health Education profession (following page):

Areas of Responsibilities and Competencies for Health Education Specialists 2010

[Areas of Responsibilities, Competencies, and Sub-competencies for Health Education Specialists 2010](#)

Areas of responsibility including related competency

I. ASSESS NEEDS, ASSETS & CAPACITY FOR HEALTH EDUCATION

- Competency 1.1: Plan Assessment Process
- Competency 1.2: Access Existing Information and Data Related to Health
- Competency 1.3: Collect Quantitative and/or Qualitative Data Related to Health
- Competency 1.4: Examine Relationships among Behavioral, Environmental and Genetic Factors That Enhance or Compromise Health
- Competency 1.5: Examine Factors that Influence the Learning Process
- Competency 1.6: Examine Factors that Enhance or Compromise the Process of Health Education
- Competency 1.7: Infer Needs for Health Education Based on Assessment Findings

II. PLAN HEALTH EDUCATION

- Competency 2.1: Involve Priority Populations and Other Stakeholders in the Planning Process
- Competency 2.2: Incorporate data analysis and principles of community organization
- Competency 2.3: Select or Design Strategies and Interventions
- Competency 2.4: Develop a Scope and Sequence for the Delivery of Health Education
- Competency 2.5: Address Factors that Affect Implementation

III. IMPLEMENT HEALTH EDUCATION

- Competency 3.1: Implement a plan of action
- Competency 3.2: Monitor Implementation of Health Education
- Competency 3.3: Train Individuals Involved in Implementation of Health Education

IV. CONDUCT EVALUATION AND RESEARCH RELATED TO HEALTH EDUCATION

- Competency 4.1: Develop Evaluation/Research Plan
- Competency 4.2: Design Instruments to Collect
- Competency 4.3: Collect and Analyze Evaluation/Research Data
- Competency 4.4: Carry out evaluation and research plans
- Competency 4.5: Interpret Results of the Evaluation/Research

V. ADMINISTER AND MANAGE HEALTH EDUCATION

- Competency 5.1: Manage Fiscal Resources
- Competency 5.2: Obtain Acceptance and Support for Programs
- Competency 5.3: Demonstrate Leadership
- Competency 5.4: Manage Human Resources
- Competency 5.5: Facilitate Partnerships in Support of Health Education

VI. SERVE AS A HEALTH EDUCATION RESOURCE PERSON

- Competency 6.1: Obtain and Disseminate Health-Related Information
- Competency 6.2: Provide Training
- Competency 6.3: Serve as a Health Education Consultant

VII. COMMUNICATE AND ADVOCATE FOR HEALTH AND HEALTH EDUCATION

- Competency 7.1: Assess and Prioritize Health Information and Advocacy Needs
- Competency 7.2: Identify and Develop a Variety of Communication Strategies, Methods, and Techniques
- Competency 7.3: Deliver Messages Using a Variety of Strategies, Methods and Techniques
- Competency 7.4: Engage in Health Education Advocacy
- Competency 7.5: Influence Policy to Promote Health
- Competency 7.6: Promote the Health Education Profession

The Internship Planning Process

MPH Internship Proposal

Each student must complete an MPH internship proposal prior to completing their internship learning plan and agreement. The internship proposal is a process that encourages students, their preceptors and their academic coordinator to carefully outline the objectives and boundaries of a potential internship activity. While it is understood that the specifics of the internship will be worked out during the internship planning process, the purpose of the internship proposal is to facilitate the negotiation of the internship's initial parameters. The completion of this form will be the responsibility of the MPH student; however, the student will need the preceptor's guidance in carefully considering the guiding questions, activities, boundaries and roles inherent in the proposed internship.

Organizational Profile of MPH Internship Site

Each student must complete, with the assistance of their preceptor, an Organizational Profile form which provides contact information of the preceptor and agency. This is an electronic form which the student will have access to through the UNCG University instructional web-space.

Internship Plan

In the fall semester prior to the spring internship, students enroll in a program planning course (HEA 648) during which they develop a comprehensive internship plan for carrying out their internship. Their internship plan is to be completed through course guidance and in consultation with their preceptor. This plan constitutes a work agreement between the student, the site preceptor, and the internship coordinator/advisor. While the details of this plan are written up by the MPH student it is expected that the preceptor will assist in making decisions about the purpose, activities and boundaries of the internship plan. The internship plan becomes the guiding force behind the internship and should be considered a road map for the activities of the actual internship.

Department of Public Health Education MPH Internship Proposal

Your name: _____ Date: _____
 Preceptor Agency: _____ Division: _____
 Preceptor: _____ Title: _____
 Preceptor Phone: _____ email: _____

You need to complete, turn in and have approved an MPH Internship Proposal before you can begin planning your internship. You will need to obtain a mission statement from your organization as part of your Proposal. IMPORTANT: Approval of your Internship Proposal does not guarantee approval of your final Internship Plan turned in at the end of the semester. The Internship Proposal will help you solidify your internship ideas/plans and will facilitate the communication of ideas between you, your preceptor and your internship advisor. You should use as much space as you need to be clear but you are encouraged to be concise. This should be completed within the first three weeks of the semester. Answer the following questions in preparation of your MPH Internship Proposal:

1. Provide a brief description of the Agency or Division's mission/function/purpose:
2. Provide a description of your MPH Internship idea/proposal with a level of detail that enables someone unfamiliar with your plan to understand 1) the question you are attempting to address and 2) the process by which you will proceed to answer that question.
3. Provide a rationale for the purpose/utility of the proposed idea to both your learning objectives and to the objectives of the organization:
4. Summarize the objectives of your proposed internship:
5. Provide your estimation of the duration/time commitment of the proposed internship:
6. Provide your understanding of the resources needed as well as the resources available for carrying out the proposed internship:
7. Provide a description of the role the identified preceptor would have in assisting you with the completion of the proposed internship:
8. What is the educational training/area of study/academic degree of your proposed preceptor:
9. If your proposed internship site is with your current place of employment, provide a thorough description of the roles and responsibilities or your current position. Also include a description of your work unit and the roles and responsibilities of your immediate supervisor.

UNCG Department of Public Health Education Organizational Profile of MPH Internship Site	
Student's Name:	Academic Year (example 2004-05):
Name Of Organization:	Organization's Focus Or Mission:
Name Of Unit/Division:	Unit's Focus Or Mission:
Name Of Organization's Director	Director's Contact Information
Director's Title	Phone:
Educational Degree/Training	Fax:
	Email:
Name of Preceptor for Student	Preceptor's Contact Information
Preceptor's Title	Phone:
Educational Degree/Training	Fax:
	Email:
Contact Address to use:	Are there any organization's requirements for interns? (e.g., liability insurance, first aid certification, CPR certification, drug tests)
	<input type="checkbox"/> No
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
	If yes, please specify:
*Please include any additional comments regarding working with an MPH Intern from UNCG:	
<small>Thank you for taking the time to complete this form. Please return to your student intern or Email/mail/fax to: Robert Strack, Assistant Professor; Internship Coordinator/Advisor Department of Public Health Education, University of North Carolina at Greensboro PO Box 26170, Greensboro, NC 27402 Telephone: (336) 334-3239; Fax: (336) 334-3238; Email: rstrack@uncg.edu</small>	

MPH Internship Learning Plan and Agreement

The Internship Learning Plan and Agreement should be considered a contract of understanding regarding the internship expectations agreed upon by the student, agency preceptor and Faculty Internship Coordinator. Students identify three to five public health education competencies (as stated by NCHEC) that will be addressed as part of the internship, the internship learning objectives related to the stated competencies, the specific activities that will be conducted to achieve the learning objectives, the assessment strategies you will use for measuring attainment of the learning objectives and target competencies, and any products that are expected to be produced. This form will also be used as the principle, but not sole, basis for the final evaluation of the student's internship. At the completion of the internship, the student, the preceptor and the faculty internship coordinator will revisit this form to assess the degree to which each area was completed and the quality of effort. This document needs to be completed at the end of the HEA 648 Program Planning class in the fall semester. The learning goals must include objectives commensurate with an advanced/graduate level health education degree.

IMPORTANT: *This document must be signed by the student, the internship coordinator/advisor, and the agency preceptor before the student can receive a grade in the program planning course and before the student formally begins the 180-hour internship*

Once the Internship Begins

Once the on-site internship activities begin there are several requirements of the student, agency preceptor and internship coordinator; listed below are minimum requirements:

- **Internship Log**
 - Each student will be accountable for maintaining an internship log recording internship activities and hours.
- **Mid-Project Meeting**
 - A mid-project meeting may take place between the student, preceptor and the faculty internship coordinator on an as needed basis. This will be/may be determined by the student, preceptor or faculty internship coordinator. During this meeting, any challenges hindering progress or barriers to a rewarding internship experience will be discussed. The meetings purpose is to adjust the internship plan for ensuring the internship activities are completed on time and task. After the meeting, a revised learning contract should be developed to reflect any changes in the timeline or scope of work. Regardless of whether a mid-project meeting takes place, the student and preceptor will be asked to complete a mid-project evaluation form.
- **Evaluation of Student Performance**
 - The student's internship performance will be determined by the internship coordinator/advisor; however, the student's preceptor will be asked to complete and evaluation form to assist in this determination. The Internship Learning Plan and Agreement forms the backbone of the final evaluation but preceptors will also be asked to assess students on the following skills:
 - ***Time Management and Follow Through*** (*sets priorities and reasonable deadlines, completes tasks on time, fulfills commitment to others*)
 - ***Verbal Communication*** (*verbal skills, listening skills, asks for and gives feedback*)
 - ***Written Communication*** (*writing documents clearly, succinctly, as instructed*)
 - ***Critical and Strategic Thinking*** (*assesses information to make informed decisions; sees the big picture and understands how actions fit into a plan; problem solves*)

- Preceptors will also be asked to provide general observations of the student’s professional aptitude and to provide targeted feedback by which the student can strive to improve:
 - *Describe new skills the student acquired or unexpected contributions the student made to the organization during the internship.*
 - *Describe areas in which the student can improve, including concrete suggestions for how the student can begin to make changes in these areas.*
 - *Please describe the student’s professional promise in terms of leadership and ability to make an impact on a particular field or on the profession of public health in general.*
- **Student Self-Evaluation and Evaluation of Preceptor Performance**
 - The student will be asked to self-evaluate their performance based on an assessment of their ability to achieve internship objectives and the quality of their work.
 - **General Comments**
 - *How successful was the Internship in helping you obtain new skills and competencies?*
 - *How clear were departmental expectations for the Internship? (circle the best answer)*
 - *My overall experience with the Internship was: (check one)*
 - *My overall rating of the Internship as a valuable learning tool is: (check one)*
 - *In the space below write anything else you would like us to know:*
 - Students will also be asked to provide feedback about the internship site, the preceptor support for internship activities and general observations:
 - **The following questions are about your Preceptor:**
 - *Preceptor was available... (circle the best answer)*
 - *Preceptor provided clear direction ... (circle the best answer)*
 - *Preceptor provided helpful and timely feedback ... (circle the best answer)*
 - *Preceptor provided agreed upon resources ... (circle the best answer)*
 - *Preceptor coordinator/advisor*
 - *Preceptor coordinator/advisor was available... (circle the best answer)*
 - *Preceptor coordinator/advisor provided clear direction ... (circle the best answer)*
 - *Preceptor coordinator/advisor provided helpful and timely feedback ... (circle the best answer)*

Internship Poster Presentation Exhibit

At the end of the internship and spring semester an Internship Poster Presentation Exhibit is held in the Elliot University Center on the UNCG campus (typically the first week in May). This exhibit is an opportunity for the student to share with others the activities and results of their internship. Preceptors are invited and strongly encouraged to attend this event. Not only does this event provide the opportunity for preceptors to support the MPH student, it also presents an opportunity for preceptors to meet current MPH students who are approaching the internship phase of their program. For this reason, we encourage preceptors to bring information about their agency/organization and ideas about projects or issues suitable for future MPH intern placements.

