

**The Pennsylvania State University
Department of Health Policy and Administration**

Internship Manual 2023

Dear Preceptor:

This guide is designed to help you simplify the formal and informal steps involved in successfully supervising a Penn State Health Policy and Administration intern. In this manual you will find a description of your role; the necessary documents needed to formalize, monitor, and complete the internship process; and some pearls of wisdom from other preceptors.

Our internship program is recognized by our students and alumni as one of the most valuable experiences of their academic careers. It provides a unique opportunity to apply classroom learning in a practical setting. Professionals like you have mentored our students for more than 30 years. Hospitals, long term-care facilities, group practices, clinics, and non-provider organizations such as insurers, trade organizations, business coalitions, and government agencies have been involved in this exchange.

Serving as a preceptor for an intern not only permits you to participate in student growth but also in the potential development of your organization's future workforce. Interns bring new skills and knowledge that contribute to the organization. They can add a fresh dimension to the environment and contribute real effort to the work at hand.

We hope you will commit to share your important knowledge and experience in health care with an HPA student. We also hope that the experience will be productive and rewarding for you and your organization.

If you have any questions or have a particular need for an intern, please feel free to contact your campus representative.

Sincerely,

**Lehigh Valley, Beaver,
Shenango, Hazleton,
Schuylkill:**
Beth Greenberg
717-385-7011
bag5413@psu.edu

Harrisburg:
Autumn Kreider
Administrative Assistant
717-948-6799
aqk5884@psu.edu

Mont Alto:
Michelle Pittman, MSHCA, RHIT, EMT
HPA Faculty
717-749-6124
Mxp99@psu.edu

University Park:
Richard N Shurgalla, M.S.,
FACHE
Director, Professional Dev.
814-863-2670
rns12@psu.edu

University Park:
Amy Thul, D.Ed.
Assoc. Director, Prof. Dev.
814-865-2223
ast144@psu.edu

World Campus:
Amy Thul, D.Ed.
Assoc. Director, Prof. Dev.
814-865-2223
ast144@psu.edu

Table of Contents

The Pennsylvania State University	4
Department of Health Policy and Administration	4
Internship Manual 2020.....	4
BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE.....	7
THE BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM.....	7
THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE.....	8
STUDENT INTERN:	9
PRECEPTOR	10
INTERNSHIP COORINDATOR:	11
CONTRACTS AND INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS	12
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.....	13
APPENDIX A – SAMPLE WORK PLAN	15
GENERAL INFORMATION:	15
APPENDIX B –SAMPLE PRECETPOR QUALIFICATIONS FORM.....	16
EDUCATION.....	16
EMPLOYMENT HISTORY	16
PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES	16

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Department of Health Policy and Administration operates within The College of Health and Human Development. The mission of the HPA department is to provide professional education, service, and research that will help improve access to quality health care at reasonable cost. The mission is achieved through the training and development of competent professionals in preparation for entry into a wide range of health service organizations, such as health maintenance organizations, health insurance companies, hospitals, long-term care facilities, home health agencies, and health care financing and regulatory agencies in government.

The department offers programs leading to BS, MHA, MS, and PhD degrees. The full-time faculty in the department has expertise in a broad range of health-related disciplines, including those listed above. Undergraduate students have the opportunity to actively participate in a variety of student professional organizations, including American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE), the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA), and the National Association of Health Service Executives (NAHSE).

THE BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM

The BS program is a 120-credit, four-year program. Students in the HPA program complete a series of general education classes completed by all Penn State students in writing and speaking skills, quantitative skills, science, humanities, and social science. Required courses in the department include Introduction to Health Services Organizations, Health Services Policy Issues, Health Care and Medical Needs, and Health Systems Management. Additional courses include Long Term Care Management, Health Care Financing, Epidemiology, Managed Care, Human Resources, Politics and Policy and many courses offered by a variety of other departments. The internship is a required course for all students and is an integral part of the Professional Development Series. Students have the option of completing the internship over one semester fulfilling 320 hours OR over two consecutive semesters fulfilling 320 hours.

HPA395 is a required professional internship that provides students the opportunity to apply skills and knowledge in a healthcare setting. Although students enrolled in HPA395 only pay for 3 credit hours, the university acknowledges HPA395 as a full time equivalent course meaning you are considered a full-time student. The HPA Department views HPA395 as the same amount of work as if you were completing 12 credit hours. Because of this, it is the department's policy that students only take 2 extra courses with their internship (HPA395) to equal 18 credits. If students have the need to enroll in more than 2 classes plus the internship their situation will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the professor in charge.

One of the unique strengths of our program is its emphasis on professional development. This work is centered on two courses:

Professional Development in Health Policy and Administration (HPA 390W): 3 credits

Students are required to take this course at least one semester prior to the internship. During this course, students will be required to:

- Prepare a cover letter and resume for use in future internship and job search activities
- Effectively use computers and software designed to enhance writing abilities and minimize errors
- Learn and practice interviewing skills
- Apply self-knowledge in planning for future coursework to support the HPA major
- Identify resources within the University, which will support internship seeking and future job search needs
- Manage time effectively to meet a variety of deadlines
- Participate in discussions regarding patient privacy and HIPAA laws

- Engage in discussions regarding generational differences in the workplace
- Engage in discussions regarding emotional intelligence in the workplace

Field Experience in Health Policy and Administration (HPA 395): 3 credits

During this course, students gain administrative training and experience for a minimum 320 hours with a health services organization. In addition, students are required to complete a weekly log of activities and experiences and write an internship abstract and PowerPoint. Students must register for the course at the campus they intend on graduating from.

THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

The administrative internship is a 320 hour work experience that can be completed either full-time (typically 10-12 weeks) or may be completed on a part-time bases over two (2) consecutive semesters. It provides students with an opportunity to apply their developing knowledge and skills in health services administration/management, research, or, policy. The internship experience uniquely prepares students by exposing them to other professionals in the field and to the work environment in a way that cannot be duplicated in the classroom. Students gain a better appreciation for the pressures that affect decision-making in today's healthcare environment and are able to identify additional skills they will need to better prepare them for a rewarding career in health care administration.

Whether the student serves in a paid position or as a volunteer, the internship is unique in that its primary purpose is educational. Many student interns are capable of providing valuable service to the organization in which they train, and many organizations are able to have important projects completed by the student interns. Given that the primary goals are educational, the organizations and the preceptors must value the opportunity to contribute to the training and development of an emerging professional.

Students are required to participate in an administrative internship experience in a health services organization where professionals act as preceptors (mentors) who can:

1. Help the emerging health care professional gain practical experience in administration/management, research, or policy.
2. Offer the student the opportunity to interact with other health professionals and provide guidance in the establishment of the intern's professional identity.
3. Offer the student opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills learned in a classroom setting.
4. Provide situations in which the student can experience the issues and problems that confront the organization.
5. Provide opportunities for the student to develop awareness of special career interests, abilities, and shortcomings in order to select appropriate relevant coursework and training during the final year of academic study.

In addition, the organizations that train interns have the opportunity to observe and evaluate potential recruits, expand their particular programs and services, provide better or additional services to their clientele, or complete special projects or educational programs. They also provide input to the Department of Health Policy and Administration on issues from curriculum relevancy to professional needs and concern.

Three participants are central to the internship experience: the student intern, the preceptor, and the director of professional development. The roles and responsibilities of each are described in the following section.

STUDENT INTERN:

A student or recent graduate undergoing supervised practical training.

For the internship to be successful, each student must be an active participant in the process. During the preparation for the internship and throughout the experience itself, students become involved in a self-assessment process in which they define and redefine goals and objectives, make informed choices, and evaluate their own personal and professional growth and development.

The internship is intended to provide the student with an opportunity to develop his/her own professional role through observation of others and by experiencing role-related tasks. Theories, concepts, and skills learned in the classroom are applied in appropriate settings under the guidance of an experienced preceptor.

Students receive assistance from the department in identifying potential internship sites, but ultimately the responsibility for securing the internship falls on the student. This involves career preparation activities such as submitting applications, refining resumes, interviewing, etc. Further assistance is provided to students and is usually tailored to their career focus area.

During the internship, the student is expected to meet all the requirements and responsibilities established by the preceptor and to work to the best of his/her abilities. Interns are expected to be timely, dress appropriately, and act professionally and dependably. In addition, interns are required to:

- Complete the internship proposal/work plan and submit the documents to the Director or Associate Director of Professional Development at least 2 weeks prior to starting your internship.
- Complete a log of the internship experience.
- Complete the internship evaluation at the conclusion of your experience.
- Prepare an abstract/summary document and associated PowerPoints documenting the highlights of your internship experience
- Participate in an online class throughout the semester(s). As a result of the discussion topics, students will have to research various aspects of the organization and interview key individuals.
- Make sure their preceptor is aware of the evaluation form that must be completed and make an appointment to review the evaluation prior to the last day of their internship.

Internship Activities:

Internships are individually tailored by students and their preceptors in consultation with the director of professional development. Preceptors are required to submit the Preceptor Qualifications Form (**Appendix B**) or a copy of their current resume. In order to match the interests of the student and the needs of the field organizations, careful planning and communication are essential on the part of all involved, but especially on the part of the student intern. A typical internship includes both **observational** and **participatory**

activities. The following are examples of activities and projects in which Penn State students have participated in recent year.

Observational Activities

Attend board meetings
 Attend department meetings
 Rotate through admin. and clinical departments
 Attend management seminars
 Shadow a physician or resident
 Observe a surgical procedure
 Ride on a medic unit for a day
 Sit in on employment interviews
 Participate in community activities
 Interact with suppliers, regulators, etc.
 Observe Joint Commission debrief

Participatory Activities

Help prepare departments for Joint Commission and/or DOH visits
 Revise a policy manual and generate reports
 Design a hospital brochure
 Write a press release and set up photos
 Assist with budgeting and allocating expenses
 Update insurance provider manuals
 Design and conduct patient satisfaction surveys
 Assist claims adjusters
 Collect information for a benchmarking project
 Create a database from organizational records

PRECEPTOR:

An expert or a specialist, such as a physician, administrator, or manager who gives practical experience and training to a student.

Preceptor Roles:

Preceptors (or mentors) are health service professionals who have an interest in sharing their administrative knowledge. They make an important commitment to the development of emerging professionals in their fields. They provide guidance and coordinate the interns' experiences in a supportive and professionally stimulating environment. The role of the preceptor is similar to that of a supervisor overseeing the work of an entry-level employee, with a particular focus on educational and personal development. Throughout the internship, the preceptor assumes a key role in the student's development. Through regularly scheduled meetings, the preceptor interacts with the student and reviews progress, answers questions, helps resolve problems, and reviews performance in the context of the intern's own goals and objectives.

The preceptor's role extends beyond the time frame of the internship itself. The following suggested guidelines represent activities normally performed by preceptors before, during, and after the internship experience.

Before the internship experience:

- Meet with the prospective intern and jointly complete the internship work plan which is online through Sites (Appendix A). Students will be given a specific deadline for submission of the work plan during the spring semester.
- Complete the Preceptor Qualifications Form which is online through Sites (Appendix B) and submit with the work plan.
- Discuss the arrival of the student and the student's role during the internship with appropriate personnel.
- Ensure that adequate space and support services are available to the student upon arrival.
- Ensure all pre-arrival arrangements have been made with other offices and that those arrangements have been communicated to the student, Human Resources, etc.

Ongoing Internship Activities:

- Make sure the student is provided with an orientation to the organization. This usually includes a tour of the facility and information about the organization's mission, history, policies, and organizational structure.
- Finalize an internship schedule with the student.
- Arrange regular meeting times to discuss progress, problems, questions, and provide performance feedback to the student on an ongoing basis.
- Introduce the student intern to other key personnel.
- Arrange for the student intern to attend staff and management-level meetings.
- Provide opportunities for the intern to observe the relationship between the organization and other local, regional, and national health organizations, as well as its relation to the community.
- Immediately contact the director of professional development with problems or concerns regarding the student intern.

Culmination

- At the end of the internship, review the student's weekly log and internship paper for accuracy. Sign off on the Student Internship Evaluation Form indicating that you have reviewed these documents.
- Complete the web-based Student Survey. The evaluation link will be sent to preceptors prior to the completion of each student's internship. We ask that you carefully complete and review the evaluation with the student. This will ensure the student will receive honest objective feedback that identifies his/her individual strengths and opportunities for improvement.

After the Internship

Maintain contact with the Department of Health Policy and Administration regarding future internship placements and other opportunities of mutual interest and, if possible, attend the annual Internship Awards Ceremony held each spring at the University Park campus.

INTERNSHIP COORDINATOR:

A member of the teaching faculty at Penn State responsible for the coordination and management of the HPA student internship program.

Coordinator Roles (PSU)

The internship coordinator is responsible for maintaining relationships among the department, student interns, and preceptors. Specific responsibilities include:

1. Develop and maintain relationships with health service organizations and agencies in which students may secure appropriate internships.
2. Provide the students with consultation and information helpful in securing and planning internships.
3. Approve each student's internship work plan to ensure that the internship experience is providing an acceptable balance of general administrative exposure and focused application of skills.

4. Be accessible to both students and preceptors by phone throughout the internship period.
5. Review the student internship log, monitor participation in Web-based discussions, and grade the internship portfolio.
6. On the basis of the preceptor reports, the student's self-evaluation, and the director's own observations, evaluate and grade each student's performance.
7. Encourage students and preceptors to give constructive feedback regarding the academic and professional preparation provided by the Department of Health Policy and Administration (HPA).

CONTRACTS AND INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

Contacts

Penn State **does not require any formal affiliation agreements** for our Health Policy & Administration student interns. If the host site does require a formal agreement, the HPA Department will provide a standard non-clinical internship affiliation agreement template for a reference point.

If the host site has an affiliation agreement they require to be utilized, Penn State will consider that option. Please know however, that any agreement, especially a non-standard affiliation contract, may take several weeks to negotiate. **Therefore, it's extremely important to understand that requirement as early into the process as possible.**

Insurance Requirements

Penn State does not require insurance, however, the student must purchase if required by the internship organization. The internship host site might have specific insurance requirements of the student (including professional liability and other types of insurance), so it is recommended that students check the host site's insurance requirements before making any insurance purchases. Some host sites might be willing to extend their insurance coverage to hosted students, but the students may wish to also purchase their own insurance coverage.

Penn State University does not provide liability insurance for students engaging in internships/rotations nor extend its insurance to students. Penn State also does not recommend specific insurance providers. Insurance is available from many insurance providers, possibly including the students' own insurance provider(s) and/or some professional association-sponsored insurance programs, but it is the students' responsibility to purchase liability insurance that meets the host sites' insurance requirements.

Most national professional associations/organizations have sponsored professional liability insurance programs available on their websites (and available to students) or the student can Google "student professional liability insurance" and numerous insurance programs/providers will appear, with insurance programs for different types of majors/occupations. Based on feedback received from other Colleges and programs, most such student professional liability insurance programs offer \$1 million - \$3 million of coverage for \$50 - \$150.

Although certainly not an exhaustive list, you may also explore other insurance programs through the following links:

<https://ed.psu.edu/epcse/special-education/student-resources/special-education-practicums/student-clearances-information>

<http://hhd.psu.edu/kines/undergraduate/495b/professional-liability-insurance>

<https://ed.psu.edu/epcse/rhs/resources/internship>

Please understand however, that are prevented by PA insurance law from recommending specific insurance providers, so the student will need to purchase the insurance herself.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How long does the internship/field experience last?

The minimum time required to complete the internship internship is 320 hours. For the residential students, you will typically work eight (8) weeks @ 40 hour/week over the summer. You may also however, complete your internship on a part-time basis over two (2) consecutive semesters.

2. What should a preceptor do if there are questions about the internship or if problems arise during the internship?

The preceptor should contact the internship coordinator for their student's campus. Contact information is provided on the internship website and the first page of the internship manual. When performance problems occur during the internship, it is appropriate to meet with the student immediately to share your concerns. This can enhance clarity of expectations and help the intern focus on areas of expected improvement. It really means dealing with the intern as you would perhaps a new employee.

In the highly unlikely event you are unable to resolve any student issues in your meeting, please contact the director of professional development immediately.

3. What about compensation for interns?

Although interns are seeking training opportunities, they also provide a valuable service to the organization. They frequently are able to complete projects that would have taken the commitment of a large amount of staff time, and they bring skills and knowledge that add real value. As many as 75% of HPA students normally work while completing their degree, but the internship makes additional work prohibitive. HPA students may incur several thousand dollars in expenses during their internship. They must pay tuition, transportation, and room and board. Any compensation they can receive helps tremendously.

All agreements about compensation are ultimately up to the preceptor, the organization, and the intern. Preceptors are encouraged to offer compensation to the students, if possible. If students cannot be salaried, compensation can be provided in a number of other creative ways. Interns can be put on wage payroll similar to other temporary employees. Stipends for travel or other expenses, meal passes, lodging, attendance at conferences, and tuition reimbursement are all valuable forms of compensation.

4. Are students insured?

Because students are not performing clinical duties, they generally do not need professional liability insurance. For most employers, student administrative interns can be used without affecting their insurance. *If, however, the placement requires students to obtain coverage, the student is responsible for obtaining it, and the preceptor must notify the student of that responsibility.* A number of companies carry student liability coverage.

Students will be advised that they must have their own health insurance. It is assumed that they would be treated as any other employee or volunteer with respect to Workers' Compensation issues. Please inform the intern about the handling of work-related injuries (should any occur) during the internship.

5. What is the difference between the undergraduate Administrative Internship and the master's degree Summer Residency Program?

Occasionally, students will approach an organization or a preceptor from each of these two distinct degree programs of HPA department. Both degrees have a field experience requirement, with approximately the same kinds of goals. Differences in age, maturity, preparation, and outlook mean that graduate students generally perform more sophisticated project work and function with less direct supervision during their summer residency than would be expected in undergraduate internships.

6. Can a student take time off during his or her internship?

Students may take time off during their internships under the following conditions:

1. They obtain permission from the preceptor in advance
2. They are able to complete their 320-hour obligation
3. Their time off does not impede any project or assignment timelines set by the preceptor

7. How will I evaluate the student at the conclusion of his/her internship?

At the conclusion of the internship, you will be sent an email communication with a link to the online student intern evaluation. We will provide you with easy to follow instructions on how to complete the evaluation.

8. Does Penn State require any affiliation agreement?

Although several internship organizations do, Penn State **does not require a formal affiliation agreement.**

APPENDIX A – SAMPLE WORK PLAN

PLEASE FILL OUT ONLINE AT: SITES.PSU.EDU/HPAINTERNSHIP

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Student Intern's Name: _____

Summer Telephone Number: _____

Organization: _____

Preceptor's Name: _____

Title: _____ Telephone: _____

Department/Division: _____

Address: _____

E-mail address: _____

Organizations website address (URL): _____

Internship Start Date: _____ Internship Completion Date: _____

STATED OBJECTIVES:

Student's Internship Goals and Objectives: (To be completed by the preceptor):

We understand, and even expect, that an internship may evolve over time as the preceptor and intern get to know one another and the intern's skills are assessed. To ensure that the student and preceptor maximize the experience however, there should be some agreement about the type of administrative experiences the student will have. To assist with this process, the Health Policy & Administration Department (HPA) created four (4) primary objectives that may serve as a roadmap for both the student and preceptor to follow. Those objectives include: 1 - To gain practical experience in health services administration or planning. 2 - To develop and professional identity, including communication and time management skills. 3 - To apply knowledge learned in the classroom and to analyze organizational activities. 4 - To learn the key aspects of a health services delivery system, including allocation of resources. In the space provided above, please list observational opportunities (committees, board meetings, clinicz) and participatory activities (committees, surveys, projects, assessment and planning activities).

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Preceptor Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B –SAMPLE PRECEPTOR QUALIFICATIONS FORM

PLEASE FILL OUT ONLINE AT: SITES.PSU.EDU/HPAINTERNSHIP

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

The Preceptor Qualifications Form should be submitted with the student's Work plan
(see address on previous page).

A new form should be completed every two years.

A current resume may be submitted in lieu of the form.

Name/Title: _____

Organization: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

_____ Form completed last year.

EDUCATION

List degree(s) obtained and the conferring institution(s).

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Briefly outline your professional employment history.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

List professional organizations to which you belong and your involvement in them.

You may attach a copy of your current resume in lieu of completing this form.