

Frequently Asked Questions About the Administrative Field Placement

As of 08/28/09

Note: The term Field Placement is a generic term to apply to the Administrative Internship, the Administrative Practicum, and the Administrative Residency. This information is relevant for all three graduate majors – MHA, HHR, and HSR.

Questions:

- 1. What is the purpose of the Administrative Internship? What is the purpose of the Administrative Practicum)? What is the purpose of the Administrative Residency?**
 - The purpose of the Administrative Internship is to assist you in integrating and applying your didactic learning to an actual healthcare setting. The Internship is a full-time, 40 hour per week, experience for one semester.
 - The Administrative Practicum is intended for students who are working full time in healthcare and want to do their placement at their place of work. The practicum is a 20-hour per week experience in which students are exposed to areas in which they have not previously worked. That might include finance and executive functions if you have a clinical background.
 - The Administrative Residency is an exception to the School of Health Administration's general practice of providing administrative internships and practicums exclusively. The Residency is 40 hours per week for two or more semester and is assigned at the preceptor's request and with the concurrence of the student.

- 2. Who must complete a Field Placement?**
 - All graduate SOHA majors must complete a field placement or a thesis.

- 3. Why is a Field Placement necessary?**
 - Good educational practice dictates a didactic and experiential learning experience. The field placement provides integration and opportunities for application.

- 4. How am I placed in a field placement?**
 - The Coordinator is the only one authorized to contact a preceptor regarding a placement. You may network among healthcare executives, but you are not permitted to initiate a discussion about field placements.

The entire process for the field placement is initiated and completed during the Seminar (HA 5191). The process is as follows:

- i. You will complete the field placement application, indicating your preference for type of institution, size, specialty, and location in Central Texas.
- ii. The Coordinator, in consultation with the School Director, reviews the applications. An initial assignment is made.
- iii. The Coordinator reviews the assignment with the student.
- iv. The Coordinator phones the preceptor at that institute or agency to request placement and to discuss the student's background.
- v. If the preceptor is in agreement, the student will phone and write the preceptor to request an interview.
- vi. The Coordinator will contact the preceptor to determine the results of the interview.
- vii. The Coordinator will confirm the preceptor's decision with the student.
- viii. The Coordinator will mail an addendum to an affiliation agreement, signed by the Coordinator, indicating the starting and ending dates. If an affiliation agreement is needed the Coordinator will initiate the affiliation agreement.
- ix. You will initiate and complete the health form, the insurance payment (money order payable to Texas State University-San Marcos); the amount varies by semester. Students will also complete the contact form as soon as possible.

5. What is the purpose of the Master's Thesis and how do you apply?

- The Master's Thesis is typically for students who desire careers in academia or already have a large amount of high-level managerial experience and therefore do not need a field placement. The thesis provides the opportunity to write and perhaps publish a paper.

6. What is a "good" placement?

- A good placement would be an institution that reflects the interests of the student (as expressed in the application), has numerous learning opportunities (not just one department), has been shown to be an excellent site as confirmed by past students, and has a good preceptor with an interest in teaching.

7. What is a "good" Preceptor?

- From our perspective, a good preceptor has earned a master's degree and is in a senior level position, preferably is board certified in healthcare management or an applicable certification to HHR or HSR, is an alumnus

of our program, and is willing to dedicate the time to mentor you. The preceptor should display a helpful attitude; a good orientation; accessibility to meetings and clarity of assigned projects; and finally, opportunities to improve communication and personal skills.

8. Is a Field Placement ever compensated and how is the amount settled (if compensated)?

- The majority of placements are not compensated and the Coordinator keeps no record of this distinction and therefore does not make assignments based on that factor. The most critical factor should be that a site provides an excellent education.

9. What is an Administrative Practicum?

- An administrative practicum is similar to administrative internship, but involves 20 hours per week as opposed to 40 hours per week in the administrative internship. This is typically reserved for students who are working in a health care institution (in a position such as a senior manager in nursing) and want their placement to be at their place of employment. A key is that the practicum must be clearly separated from the job. A student's regular job cannot be considered an administrative practicum. Compensation, if it is available, is discussed between you and the preceptor. The Coordinator has no involvement in the matter of compensation.

10. What can I do now to achieve the type of Field Placement I want?

- The best thing to do early on is to consider the type of institute or agency and location in which you want to do your field placement. You can research types of institutions online and you can attend conferences and talk with managers about their institutions, without soliciting a field placement.

11. What can I do now to prepare for the Thesis (if that is my choice)?

- The most important thing is to determine a subject for research. You can do this by considering the research of your professors and, most importantly, select an area in which you have an intense interest. The master's thesis may become an avenue to publishing and paving a way for an academic career.

12. What is my role during the Field Placement? How much should I engage in discussions at Executive and Board Meetings?

- You may feel guilty because you are not actually doing a job. That is not your role. Your role is that of a student. If you are asked to do a project

that benefits the institution then you can see this as an opportunity to repay the institution for the field placement. Do not make suggestions for improvement in any areas, unless asked. You are not a consultant to the institution, but a student. This is important to remember.

13. What is a “good” student in Field Placement?

- Preceptors are looking for students who are energetic, highly interested, willing to come in early and stay late, to do extra work and maintain a very positive attitude. Preceptors expect you to maintain professionalism in your appearance and in your communications.

14. What are the Coordinator’s requirements for reports and projects (and the deadlines)?

- Reports include the following:
 - i. You must turn in (by e-mail) weekly reports that describe your activities. These reports must integrate what was learned in the classroom with your field placement activities.
 - ii. You must turn in (by the end of your second week) a proposal for a project. This can be a project that is assigned by the preceptor.
 - iii. You must turn in the final project two weeks prior to graduation. The Coordinator also reviews the preceptor’s evaluation of the student.
 - iv. You must turn in an alumni survey at the end of your field placement.

15. Who will evaluate me and based on what criteria?

- The preceptor will evaluate you using the form in the SOHA Field Placement Handbook. The Coordinator issues the final grade (Credit or Non-Credit) based on completion of the requirements of the field placement.

16. What if there is a major clash (that is not my fault) during the field placement? Is there a backup plan?

- This rarely occurs but if it does the backup plan would be for you to receive an “I” and be placed at another location the next semester.

17. When do I apply for graduation?

- You should apply for graduation within the first week of your field placement. That deadline is posted on the academic calendar. You may apply for graduation online.

18. Again, what are the other key deadlines?

- The key deadlines are application for graduation (first week of field practice), weekly reports (each Friday), project proposal (second week of field placement), and final project (two weeks prior to graduation).

19. What essential documents must be turned in during the first four (4) weeks of the start of HA 5191 so that I will be able to early register?

- The following documents are required:
 - i. Application for field placement (second class meeting)
 - ii. Money order for insurance, payable to Texas State University-San Marcos (final class meeting)
 - iii. Health Form (final class meeting)
 - iv. Affiliation agreement with facility (Coordinator's responsibility)

20. When is it appropriate for me to broach the subject of possible employment with my Preceptor? When is it appropriate for me to commence a job search and should I communicate this to my Preceptor?

- It is appropriate for you to broach the subject of the possibility of employment at the halfway mark. You may indicate you are starting a job search and ask if there would any possibility of employment at the site? If not, you may ask if the preceptor be willing to serve as a reference for you.

21. What are some of the things I should keep in mind regarding professionalism and common courtesies?

- It is essential that you maintain confidentiality, meaning information should never be shared concerning the institution. Of particular importance is information that could be of competitive advantage. Also, it is not appropriate to share one department head's confidential comments with other department heads, as this may create ill feelings. It is highly recommended that you dress conservatively, with men wearing suits or blue blazers and gray slacks and women wearing suits. You may relax that standard upon seeing what the executive staff commonly wear. At social functions, remember that you represent both the institution and the University.

22. What is meant by proprietary information and why is confidentiality so important?

- Proprietary information is any information that could be used for a competitive advantage, such as plans, marketing, construction, etc. You should never share such information. It is better not to share information with other students or employees with other organizations than to share it, particularly in this phase of you professional career

23. What should I do to prepare for an interview?

- It is important to learn as much as you can about the institution so that you will show an interest, be able to answer questions and be informed about the institution and the preceptor. It is also important to learn interview skills taught in the Seminar (HA 5191) course as well as to read as much as you can about interviewing. It is also important to be yourself.

24. How could I get myself in trouble with my Preceptor? (i.e. What could get me removed for the field placement?)

- Major offenses such as misuse of funds, unprofessional relationships, sharing of proprietary information, disclosure of confidential information and showing up consistently late could get you removed from the site. We do not expect this to happen as we know you will be professional. We are just being candid so students will know of the importance of professionalism. While these things make common sense, problems have occurred, in rare instances, in the past. Inform the Coordinator immediately if you perceive that an action on your part may become a major problem – (i.e. a legal issue or a personnel issue).

Please be aware that many institutions now do criminal background checks and drug screens on all employees and students. If that could be a problem for you, you may want to consider a thesis.

25. How can I appropriately show gratitude to my Preceptor at the beginning and end of the internship?

- We recommend that you send a personal, hand-written note to preceptors to thank them for the interview. At the end of field experience, it is high appropriate for you to purchase a gift (at nominal price) for the preceptor and to write them a personal thank you note. Remember, the preceptor is not required to take you as a student, but has done this out of generosity and an interest in your education.