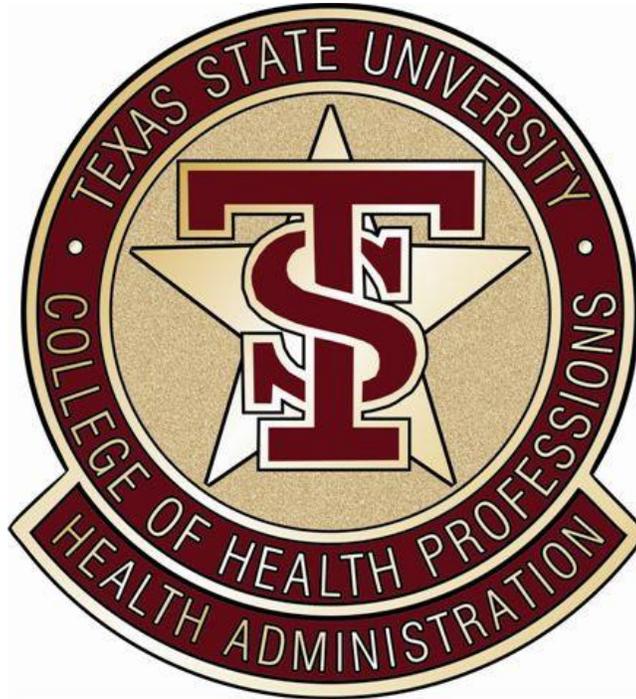


School of Health Administration
Undergraduate Student Field Placement Handbook



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Guidelines for Undergraduate field placements

Overview

The administrative internship is a full-time, organization-based field placement providing the student with exposure to healthcare administration and experience working on assigned projects. The student will be on-site for at least 40 hours per week and/or as directed by the student's preceptor. All course requirements are described in the course syllabus. The field placement begins on the first class day of the semester and concludes at the end of the last class day of the semester. The content of the field placement will differ from one student to another depending upon the individual needs of the student and the characteristics of the host organization.

Purpose

The purpose of the graduate field placement is to integrate the student's academic preparation with participation in and observation of actual management practice in a health or healthcare organization. The student will participate by interacting with senior level executives, departmental managers, and staff under the philosophy of explore, examine, and attend.

Explore all departments and sections within the organization,
Explore other organizations within the organizational family,
Explore other organization types to broaden knowledge,
Examine the full range of health administration and management, and
Attend a variety of staff, senior, and executive meetings and activities.

The student is to observe health management in action and participate in assigned projects under the guidance of a preceptor from the host organization. Supporting the student and preceptor is the faculty supervisor, a Texas State University faculty member responsible to oversee the academic and administrative elements of the field placement.

Objectives

Upon completing the field placement, the student should be able to do the following

1. Demonstrate professionalism, the ability to make decisions through rational methods, and communications skills – both written and oral.
2. Describe how the field placement activities integrate with knowledge acquired in the classroom.
3. Explain the roles and responsibilities of the various administrative positions, departmental functions, and various services provided by the host organization.
4. Identify formal and informal communication processes and aspects of the host organization.
5. Describe the organizational and legal structure of the host organization.
6. Describe the leadership styles and predominant cultures of the host organization.
7. Describe services provided by the host organization.
8. Describe change management, quality assessment, and the practice of ethics within the host organization.

Additionally, the student will complete a major project mutually agreed upon by the student and preceptor. The student will submit a project proposal to the student's faculty supervisor earlier in the residency. The project will demonstrate that the student has a working understanding of project management in support of any particular organizational unit or program of the host organization.

Placement Process

1. The field placement coordinator will distribute **field placement applications and/or collect resumes** from HA 4141 students before the first class meeting.
2. The field placement coordinator will match students with sites that align as closely as possible with their needs as identified on the field placement application.
3. The field placement coordinator will contact preceptors at the matched sites to ensure that they can accept students for the semester in question. The students will then contact the preceptors or preceptors' offices to schedule interviews.
4. After the interviews, the field placement coordinator will check with both the sites and the students to ensure compatibility. If not compatible, the coordinator will notify the sites and match the students to another sites.
5. If students fail to complete pre-internship academic requirements such as the exit exam, background checks, and immunization forms, the field placement coordinator will notify preceptors and students that the field placement will not start until further notice.

Field Placement at Place of Employment

The student may request to complete the student's field placements at the student's place of employment as long as the field placement hours, physical location, and assignments are beyond what is expected in the student's job description and in the course of the student's regular duties. Additionally, the field placement will be under the direction of a preceptor other than the employment supervisor or other manager reporting to that supervisor. The student is responsible to discuss this request with the field placement coordinator. The student must clearly understand that a key priority of the School of Health Administration and the Program is to provide a well-rounded field placement experience.

Liability Insurance, Health Form, and Criminal Background Check

The university pays for liability insurance. The student must submit a completed immunization form and background check prior to beginning the field placement. There will be no exceptions to this policy and the student not in compliance will not be allowed to start the field placement. Some field placement sites may require a drug screen. In these cases, the student will complete the necessary screen as directed. The student will be responsible for all associated costs.

Student Conduct

The student in a field placement must conduct himself/herself in a professional manner and be responsible for understanding and complying with the policies of the host organization. The student must understand that the student is in a learning role and that no line or staff authority may be assumed, even if assigned by the preceptor. The student is expected to be fully involved in those projects assigned by the preceptor.

If on-site problems occur, the preceptor has every right to ask that the student be removed. Should that occur, the field placement coordinator will help the student understand the reason for the removal and develop personal and professional lessons from it. A grade of Fail may be issued. If a grade of Fail is issued, the student must repeat the placement process and register for HA 4848 in a subsequent semester. If a grade of fail is not issued, and if sufficient time remains in the semester, an alternative field placement site may be arranged.

The Faculty Supervisor's Role

While day-to-day supervision of the student is the responsibility of the preceptor, academic supervision of the student and oversight of university administrative requirements is the responsibility of faculty supervisor. The faculty supervisor will be responsible for all academic aspects of the field placement: receiving and evaluating weekly reports, receiving and approving the project proposal, receiving and evaluating the project, coordinating end of semester evaluations and surveys, and issuing the final grade.

The Preceptor

The Preceptor is essential to the success of the School of Health Administration's field placement program. The preceptor's role is critical to the education of undergraduate students.

The preceptor is the chief executive officer or other executive leader or senior manager who provides overall supervision of the student during the field placement. The preceptor may delegate the student's day-to-day supervision and scheduling to another manager or staff person of sufficient seniority and authority to provide a senior-leader experience for the student.

The preceptor is a teacher and counselor for the student. The preceptors ideally should meet with the student weekly or bi-weekly at a minimum. The preceptor sets the tone for other leaders and managers who will meet with the student during the field placement. The preceptor should include the student in a wide variety of meetings, activities, and projects, to include meetings of senior, executive, and governing committees and bodies.

The preceptor will help develop, review, and approve the student's schedule for rotations and projects. It is the responsibility of the student to initiate the schedule, unless the preceptor has already done so. The student should plan to attend as many of the organization's functions as possible (routine meetings, project planning and implementation events, special activities, etc.). While the student's home base in the organization will typically be a specific department or office, access to the entire organization and its functions is vital to encourage and facilitate an organization-wide schedule of rotations.

The student will provide feedback about the field placement site at the end of the semester. Areas of feedback will include initial orientation, accessibility to meetings, clarity of assigned projects, helpfulness of preceptor and other leaders, and opportunities to improve along the range of our Program's competencies. See Program competencies later in this handbook.

Financial compensation is not a requirement of the field placement, and the student agrees to complete a field placement without financial compensation.

Special thanks to the preceptor! The preceptor is the heart and soul of our field placement program and is vital to the success of the student.

Major Project

The student in the field placement will complete and submit a paper describing a major project undertaken during the field placement. The project topic typically meets an organizational need and is agreed upon by the preceptor and the student. The project proposal is approved by the faculty supervisor. While each student's project is unique, the proposal must sufficiently describe the problem, process to address the problem, data or other findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The paper will adhere to the current edition of the APA Style Guide. An example for the proposal and the final paper will be provided on the university's Learning Management System (LMS).

Major Project Proposal

The student will submit the major project proposal to the preceptor and the faculty supervisor by the date listed on the LMS. A sample project proposal will be provided on the LMS. This proposal will include at least the following information:

- A description of the organization in which the field placement is taking place.
- A description of the student's objectives (outcomes) for the field placement.
- A description of the project to be performed during the placement.
- A description of the student's objectives (outcomes) for the project focusing on how the project relates to knowledge gained from didactic coursework.

Progress Reports

The student will submit a weekly progress report to the faculty supervisor through the LMS. In these academic reports, the student will describe learning activities of the previous week and lessons learned from those activities. The student will demonstrate an integration of the learning activities with the Program curriculum. The reports should follow a day-by-day format for the description of learning activities. The lessons learned may be listed day-by-day or in a consolidated fashion. The report will be two to four pages in length and be both descriptive and analytical. The weekly report will be emailed as an attachment by noon each Monday. The student and faculty will maintain complete confidentiality of the reports and organizational information therein. A sample report will be provided on the LMS.

Preceptor Feedback to Student

The preceptor will submit an online survey that includes an evaluation of the student using a link provided on the LMS that the student will provide to the preceptor. This opportunity is part of the student's professional development and should encourage the preceptor to provide meaningful feedback to the student. The preceptor feedback will ask for the student's areas of strength and areas for improvement as well as the student's competency level. See Program competencies.

Student Feedback to Preceptor

The faculty supervisor will require the student to provide site-specific feedback in the student's final project paper. The final report will describe the project as well as provide feedback to the faculty supervisor.

Grade

The student is graded on a credit (pass) or no credit (fail) basis. The student must complete all requirements to receive a passing grade. The grade is made by the faculty supervisor based upon completion of requirements stated in the syllabus and this handbook, and input from the preceptor through the online survey.

Program Competencies

The field placement provides an opportunity for the student to develop along the entire range of professional competencies as adopted for undergraduate students by the School of Health Administration. The student should strive to develop from the knowledge level of competency to the expert level.

Knowledge: The student cites findings; recalls pertinent names and terms; identifies relevant facts; recalls and uses theories, events and sequences; and correctly uses subject area vocabulary. Additionally, the student discusses alternatives; solves problems; makes accurate decisions based on facts; has full command of area terms, concepts, and principles; and explains area to others.

Application: The student determines and applies appropriate knowledge, makes decisions and takes actions; solves problems independently; utilizes others for expertise and decides when consultation is required; and conducts research in the field.

Expert: The student utilizes experience in applying knowledge in an operational setting; takes independent action; writes and publishes in the field; and evaluates and critiques works of others in the field.

1. Communications & Relationship Management

Relationship Management
Communication Skills
Negotiation

2. Leadership

Leadership Skills & Behavior
Operational Climate & Culture
Communicating Vision
Managing Change

3. Professionalism

Personal & Professional Accountability
Professional Development & Lifelong Learning
Contributions to the Community and Profession

4. Knowledge of the Healthcare Environment

Healthcare Systems and Organizations
Healthcare Personnel
The Patient's Perspective
The Community & Environment

5. Business Skills and Knowledge

General Management
Financial Management
Human Resources Management
Organizational Dynamics and Governance
Strategic Planning & Marketing

Frequently Asked Questions About the Field Placement

1. What is the purpose of the field placement?

The purpose of the field placement is to assist the student in integrating and applying the didactic learning to an experiential and actual healthcare environment. The field placement is a one-semester, full-time (40 hours a week) experience.

2. Who must complete a field placement?

All BHA students must complete a field placement in order to graduate.

3. Why is a field placement necessary?

Good educational practice mandates a blended didactic and experiential learning experience. The field placement provides integration and opportunities for application of lessons developed in the classroom as required by the Association of University Programs in Healthcare Administration (AUPHA).

4. How am I placed in a field placement?

The field placement coordinator is the only one authorized to contact a preceptor regarding a placement. The student may network among healthcare executives, but the student is not permitted to initiate a discussion about field placements. The process is initiated and completed during HA 4141. The step-by-step process is described earlier in this handbook.

5. What is an ideal placement?

An ideal placement is an organization that reflects the interests of the student, 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.

6. What is an ideal preceptor?

An ideal preceptor is a senior executive with a graduate degree, board certified in a health-related specialty, who is willing to commit a reasonable amount of time to mentor you with a helpful attitude. The preceptor provides a good orientation, access to meetings and other leaders in the organization, clarity of assigned projects, and opportunities to improve your communications and professional skills. The preceptor should encourage the student to explore, examine, and attend throughout the organization.

7. Is a field placement ever compensated and, if compensated, how is the amount determined?

The field placement is not a compensated opportunity; it is a university course. The field placement coordinator does not ask about or maintain records of past site-specific compensation practices nor will the field placement coordinator make an assignment based on that factor. Any discussion about compensation occurs between the student and preceptor. The most critical factor in placement is finding a site that provides an excellent educational experience. Any requirements related to compensation cannot interfere with course objectives.

8. What is the student's role during the field placement?

The student should observe health management in action and participate in assigned projects under the guidance of a preceptor from the host organization. The student will participate by interacting with senior level executives, departmental managers, and staff under the philosophy of explore, examine, and attend. The student should approach each department rotation with a learning attitude and spirit of cooperation.

Explore all departments and sections within the organization,

Explore other organizations within the organizational family,
Explore other organization types to broaden knowledge,
Examine the full range of health administration and management, and
Attend senior leader meetings at the organizational level.

9. How much should the student engage in discussions at executive, governing, and staff meetings?

The student should never make suggestions for improvement in any areas, unless asked. The student is not a consultant to the institution.

10. What will make me a good student in the field placement?

The preceptor is looking for a student who is energetic, highly interested, willing to expend every effort to succeed, eager to accept or find project assignments, and maintain a very positive attitude. The preceptor expects the student to maintain professionalism in appearance and in communications. In addition, this is a formal part of the student's curriculum, so the student is there to learn in an experiential setting. The student should take advantage of this unique opportunity and explore, examine, and attend as much as the student can during the placement.

11. What is the faculty supervisor's requirements for reports and projects (and the deadlines)?

- A. The student must turn in a weekly report that describes the student's activities the previous week. The focus is on what the student did and what the student learned from what the student did. In the report, the student should integrate weekly activities with what the student learned in the classroom.
- B. The student must turn in a proposal for a project. This will be a project that is agreed upon by the student and the preceptor. The faculty supervisor's role is to approve the proposal.
- C. The student must turn in a final paper describing the project.
- D. All due dates are listed on the LMS.

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

The preceptor will provide you with feedback using an online survey. The link will be available on the LMS and should be provided to the preceptor by the student. The faculty supervisor issues the final grade (Credit or Non-Credit) based on completion of the requirements of the field placement.

13. When does the student apply for graduation?

A successful internship semester means that the student will graduate at the end of the internship semester. Therefore, the student should apply for graduation in accordance with Texas State University's policies and deadlines established for the semester of the student's internship.

14. What are the key dates for the field placement?

Specific calendar dates will be listed on the LMS.

15. What essential documents must be submitted at the deadlines specified on the syllabus outline for HA 4141 so that the student will be able to register for HA 4848?

The following documents are required and will be submitted through the LMS:

- A. **Resume and/or field placement application**
- B. **Immunization form**
- C. **Background check results**
- D. **Professional photo**
- E. **Resident Placement Form (submitted after the site-interview and approval of the placement by the supporting organization)**

16. When is it appropriate for the student to commence a job search? Should the student communicate this to my preceptor? When is it appropriate for the student to talk with the preceptor about the possibility of employment in the organization?

The student should constantly be scanning the environment for future job opportunities. The student should commence a job search anytime but understand that the field placement is full-time (40 hours a week) through the end of the semester. It is appropriate for the student to wait until the halfway mark of the semester before talking with the preceptor about the possibility of employment in the organization. In doing so, the student may indicate that the student is starting a job search and ask if there would be any possibility of employment at the site. If not, the student may ask if the preceptor is willing to serve as a reference.

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

The student's professionalism will be on display every day. The student should dress conservatively, with men wearing suits or blazers and slacks and women wearing suits. The student may relax that standard upon seeing how the executive staff commonly dress. At social functions, the student should remember that the student represents the preceptor, the organization, Texas State University, and the School of Health Administration.

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

Proprietary information is any information the organization wants to keep secret for business, competitive, or other reasons. It is essential that the student maintains complete confidentiality with all proprietary information whether the student feels it would provide the recipient a competitive advantage or not. In fact, the student must keep complete confidentiality with all internal information and matters that the student learns. The student should never share information concerning the field placement organization with anyone other than the faculty supervisor as a part of the weekly report or the final paper. In addition, it is never appropriate for the student to share one person's confidential comments with anyone else in the organization. The trust that the student loses when violating the rule of confidentiality is almost never regained.

19. What should the student do to prepare for an interview?

It is important for the student to learn as much as the student can about the institution so that the student will be able to demonstrate interest in the organization and understanding of its mission. The student should also learn about the preceptor or other persons conducting the interview, so the student can talk about shared interests or values. In both cases, this research will ease the student's concerns, help the student be more confident, and allow the student to ask appropriate questions. It is also important for the student to review and practice the interviewing skills taught in HA 4141 and in other professional readings. The more the student practices, the more at ease the student will be during the interview. The student has incredible resources to develop interview skills at the Department of Career Services in the LBJ Student Center.

20. Are criminal background checks and drug screens required?

The School of Health Administration utilizes a third party to conduct routine background checks on all students planning to participate in the administrative internship. The student will be given instructions in HA 4141 on how to apply for a background check. The student's specific field placement site may require additional drug screens. If a student anticipates that a background check or drug screen will result in a report showing a criminal offense or positive drug result, the student should contact the field placement coordinator immediately.

21. How could the student get in trouble with the preceptor? What could get the student removed from 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 may well result in the preceptor directing the student's departure from the field placement. While avoiding these and similar activities makes common sense, occasional student offenses have previously occurred (being asleep at one's desk, spreading rumors, or otherwise being disruptive to the business on site). The student should inform the student's faculty supervisor immediately if the student perceives that an action on the student's part may become a problem.

22. What happens if the student does not complete the field placement?

The field placement is a required course in the BHA degree plan. There is no mechanism for ending the field placement early for any reason. There are no exceptions. Accepting a job that requires a student to start before the semester's last class day is not a valid reason to end the field placement early. If the student does not successfully achieve the course requirements, the student will be given a grade of Fail.

23. What happens if there is an issue that results in the student not being able to complete the field placement?

This rarely occurs, but if it does, the first step is for the faculty supervisor, working with the preceptor, to investigate and fully understand the reason(s) for the situation. Based on that understanding, the faculty supervisor and the preceptor (if appropriate) will work with the student to determine the best way to proceed. The plan may include the student receiving a grade of incomplete and continuing the field placement in a subsequent semester and at a different organization.

24. How can the student appropriately show gratitude to the student's preceptor at the beginning and end of the internship?

After the interview, the student should send a personal, hand-written note to the potential preceptor expressing appreciation for the interview. At the end of the field placement, the student should also write a personal, hand-written note to the preceptor. It is also appropriate for the student to present a professional gift, such as a nominally priced professional book, to the preceptor.