



**Medical College of Georgia
Department of Health Informatics
Master of Public Health Program**

IMPH 8722 Internship Manual

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Internship Policies & Procedures	2
Objectives	2
Roles	2
Requirements.....	3
Assessment.....	4
Information for Students.....	6
Student Responsibilities & Performance Expectations	6
Ethical Guidelines for Students	7
Periodic Reports.....	8
Information for Preceptors	10
Objectives for a standard Internship	10
Expectations for Preceptors	10
During the Internship.....	11
After the Internship.....	11
Ethical & Performance Concerns	12
Ethical Guidelines provided to Students.....	12
Performance Concerns	12

Dear Internship Participant:

The Masters of Public Health program established its Internship program to place graduate students in organizational settings to afford the student an experiential learning opportunity. The goal of the program is to allow students to integrate their academic background with practical, real world experiences. It is the belief of the faculty and student body that such an experience is vital to producing the future leaders of the healthcare industry.

The benefits of the Internship program are four-fold:

- The program aids in shaping and defining a student's career goals through exposure to public health and health informatics while still in school,
- The combination of academic studies and professional experience synergistically produces a greater learning environment,
- It helps market the newly created informatics MPH into the region's health care field, and
- It affords an opportunity for students to return to school and share their experiences with new incoming students.

Exposure to a health agency or care setting in an 8-12 week summer Internship offers the student some advantages usually associated with 12-18 month post-graduate fellowships. The influences and experiences gained from the Internship will help guide the student in his/her last year of studies into a field of healthcare management most suitable for the individual and the prospective organization. Students returning from their Internship are also able to apply their practice knowledge and experience to their second year of course work. The insights and knowledge gained by the students have a tremendous impact on their ability to grasp and negotiate the more detailed academic material characteristic of the program's second year course load. The specifics of the Internship are detailed in the accompanying MCG Internship Policies and Guidelines. If you have any questions regarding the specifics of the Internship or School please contact me at your convenience.

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Internship Policies and Procedures

Objectives

The purpose of the Internship experience is to provide students with an opportunity to apply concepts, strategies, and tools acquired through the course of their study. Regardless of the exact nature of the experiential location, activities, preceptors, or specific student objectives, the overall objectives of the Internship experience for MPH students within MCG are as follows:

- Enhance students' knowledge of basic public health and health services practices.
- Increase student self-confidence as a professional in the public health arena.
- Increase students' awareness of the complexity of public health and health care issues and concerns.
- Provide an opportunity for students to apply the public health training they have covered in their courses.
- Increase students' appreciation of information management in diverse settings served by public health and health services professionals.
- Facilitate increased understanding of the relationships among public health organizations, other health service organizations, and governmental entities.
- Develop opportunities for references, job opportunities, and professional contacts.
- Afford opportunities to provide valuable service(s) to the host site organization by participating in and/or completing projects or other work assignments. It is not expected that every Internship experience will serve or accomplish all of these overall objectives. Indeed, it would be an unusual experience that would encompass all of them. However, it is expected that the Internship experience will include many, if not most of these objectives.

Roles

At a minimum, students will be assisted by two individuals in their efforts to plan and execute their Internship experience. Specific activities and role responsibilities are summarized in the attached matrix ("Internship Activities and Responsibilities"). Below is a brief summary of general expectations for each participant.

1. Preceptor

The host site Preceptor is the point of contact for the student within their Internship location. The Preceptor functions as the immediate supervisor of the student. This is the person with the professional skills and knowledge to direct the on-site experience of the student. The Preceptor (or another host site representative) will work with the student to develop the WORK PLAN. The Preceptor will evaluate the student's performance at the conclusion of the Internship experience.

2. Internship Coordinator

The Internship Coordinator is an MCG faculty member and functions as the point of contact during the Internship and a resource for assisting the student in identifying possible Internship locations and developing an appropriate WORK PLAN. The Internship Coordinator maintains the records associated with each student's Internship and monitors the progress of all students during their practical experiences. Following each student's Internship, the Internship Coordinator will be responsible for gathering the final evaluations from the Preceptor, and gathering documentation of the requisite student documentation and assigning final grades to the student.

3. Student

- All Internship arrangements are ultimately the responsibility of the student and subject to departmental approval.
- The student is primarily responsible for sending out inquiries, setting up meetings, ensuring communication among those involved, and making preliminary arrangements. The student is encouraged to seek information and advice from former students, current students who have completed their Internship, other faculty, and the Internship Coordinator.
- The student is responsible for living, travel, and correspondence arrangements prior to and during the Internship.
- Each student is personally liable for their own behavior and performance during their Internship. Although a faculty person is designated for registration purposes, neither MCG nor any faculty has contractual arrangements with the Internship host site/agency.
- The WORK PLAN is to ensure explicit communication of Internship arrangements and expectations, but should not be interpreted as a legal document or contract. The work plan may be developed in collaboration with faculty and agency personnel, but its timely completion and

submission are solely the responsibility of the student.

- The student, Preceptor, and Internship Coordinator will determine the exact nature of the Internship commitment (i.e. start or completion dates, total number of weeks, or number of days worked per week, or hours per day, etc.).
- The student is responsible for completing all assignments and components of the Internship in a timely manner. Written reports, papers, and other products will be required.

Requirements

Students in the MPH degree program are required to complete an Internship experience as part of their curriculum. A student will earn 2 hours of Internship credit. *Even though, two (2) credit hours (minimum 40 contact hours x 8-12 weeks) of Internship are required in the MPH degree plan but the internship is driven by its deliverables and outcomes, not measured by credit hours.* The number of contact hours required for Internship credit is defined by departmental guidelines. All MPH students will be expected to complete the following minimum requirements:

1. Internship Confirmation;
2. A WORK PLAN;
3. Periodic reports summarizing activities, progress on objectives identified on the WORK PLAN, and lessons learned; and
4. A final report. The Internship should not duplicate current or previous work experiences, but rather, build on a student's background and expertise in order to challenge them to learn new perspectives and employ new practices to better prepare them for a career in public health.

Work Plan

The Internship site and all Internship objectives, activities, and products must be approved by the Internship Coordinator and Preceptor. At a minimum the WORK PLAN must identify the specific objectives of the Internship, proposed activities and responsibilities, anticipated observational opportunities, and target products or materials. The WORK PLAN is the formal agreement (but not a contract) between the student, the Internship Coordinator and Preceptor. The Preceptor and student must each sign the work plan (indicating approval); a completed work plan is required of all students.

Contact Information

Prior to, or immediately upon the start of the Internship, students are expected to provide their Internship Coordinator with information regarding their address and phone number during the Internship experience; an office phone, fax number and an e-mail address during the Internship; host site contact person, title, address, phone, fax, and e-mail address; web site address for the host site (if applicable).

Periodic Reports

Every student is required to complete and submit written periodic reports to the Internship Coordinator over the course of the Internship experience. These periodic reports will consist of a log of activities (periodic logs), progress on objectives, and observations/lessons learned. Copies of each periodic report will be included in the student's file. No client or host site individual names are to be used in written material (or in any presentations) without consent.

Final Report

The final report should include an assessment of whether or not the objectives were met, along with how they were met, a summary of major projects and activities engaged in over the course of the Internship, and a thoughtful reflection on how the Internship experience contributed to the student's overall educational experience and professional development. Format, length and additional required components are determined by Internship policies and procedures.

Assessment

Upon completion of the Internship, the Internship Coordinator will award a grade of either an "A" or an "F" for satisfactory or unsatisfactory work based on satisfactory completion of the requirements outlined above (and any additional requirements outlined in departmental policy). The Internship Coordinator will initiate an Internship Completion Form when sufficient information is available to determine an evaluation. When all required items on the Internship Completion form are completed, the Internship Coordinator will submit the final grade to the Registrar's office. Each student will be evaluated by their Preceptor at the conclusion of the Internship (see Preceptor Evaluation Form). The Preceptor's evaluation of the student will be considered in determining the student's satisfactory completion of the Internship. If a student defaults on the terms of the WORK PLAN, the student may receive an "unsatisfactory" grade and thus no credit for the Internship. If during the course of the Internship, the Preceptor or the Internship Coordinator determines that a student is having difficulty functioning in a particular setting the student may be reassigned or asked to withdraw from the Internship credit and retake the Internship during a future semester. If the student behavior is determined to be unprofessional, unethical, or outside the rules of the agency or university, the student may be given an unsatisfactory ("F") grade and thus no credit will be received for the Internship, and/or may be removed from the degree program

depending upon individual circumstances.

Information for Students

Student Responsibilities and Performance Expectations

The curriculum objectives of the Internship are for the student to gain supervised experience in public health, health informatics, and health administration, to learn new methods and perspectives that link public health theory and practice, to interact with and participate with additional mentors, and to expand their network of contacts. The Internship should not duplicate current or previous work experiences, but rather, build on the student's background and expertise in order to create the challenge of learning new perspectives and the employment of new practices, so that the student may be better prepared for a health career. Regardless of the type of Internship, students are responsible for determining and confirming the location and activities. Once a selection has been made, the Internship must be approved by the Internship Coordinator. The Department Chair, other faculty, and the Internship Coordinator, are available to help students define their Internship objectives and to suggest host site contacts. Students may initiate contacts, or they may be made on the student's behalf by the faculty or Internship Coordinator. However, *all arrangements are ultimately the responsibility of the student and subject to approval.*

The Internship Coordinator must approve all Internship objectives and locations. A WORK PLAN (including specific objectives and activities along with accompanying signatures) and Internship Confirmation form must be signed by the Preceptor and the Internship Coordinator seven days after the start of the Internship.

The student is responsible professionally and financially for their Internship at all stages. Students are free to send out inquiries, set up meetings, insure communication between/among those involved, and make preliminary arrangements for possible Internship opportunities. Students may find it helpful to seek information and advice from former students or more advanced students who have completed their Internship. The department faculty, and/or the Internship Coordinator may also assist the student in developing their Internship placement; however, the Internship Coordinator has final approval of Internship placement, objectives, and activities. The student is solely responsible for living, travel, and correspondence arrangements during the Internship. The aim of this approach is to enhance the student's career development skills with guidance and support from the faculty. Students are personally liable for their own behavior and performance during their Internship.

Although a faculty person is designated for registration purposes, MCG, nor any faculty member, has any contractual arrangements with the Internship host site or agency. A

WORK PLAN is instituted to ensure the explicit communication of Internship arrangements and expectations, and is not a legal document or contract. The student, Preceptor, and the Internship Coordinator will determine the exact nature of the Internship commitment (e.g., start or completion dates, total number of weeks, number of days worked per week, hours per day, etc.).

Students are responsible for completing all assignments and components of the Internship in a timely manner. This documentation may be developed in collaboration with faculty and agency personnel, but its timely completion and submission are the sole responsibility of the student. Typically, students will be responsible for their own travel and lodging arrangements associated with relocating for an Internship. Travel funds *may* be available through the host institution or limited grants to reimburse or partially support travel directly related to some practical experiences. Students are encouraged to clarify whether the host site will reimburse travel expenses to conferences and/or meetings during or following the Internship for presentation of the project's final report or publication(s). Students *may* receive salary or wages for their Internship experience depending solely on the host institution. Payment may be made hourly, periodically, or on a monthly basis; or a specified amount may be agreed upon for the entire experience. Students should clarify whether sick and/or vacation time is allowed, or if needed, and whether such days must be made up before the completion of the Internship. If the Internship does not provide "fringe" benefits, students will be responsible to incur the cost of their own health insurance coverage during the experience. Students may be covered by student health insurance while enrolled; however, other arrangements may be needed to receive care out of the service area. Students are also held responsible for their own income tax and social security payments, and for any compensation received during the Internship. The Internship host site may require professional liability insurance. If so, it is the responsibility of the student to obtain the required insurance.

Ethical Guidelines for Students

- Any and all information related to clients of the host agency is to remain confidential.
- Students must follow standards of academic integrity as outlined in the Graduate Student Handbook. Any student identified as having engaged in any acts of academic dishonesty (including, but not limited to, copying information available through the worksite and presenting it as the student's own work to either representatives of the host organization or the Faculty) while engaged in Internship activities will be subject to the same review process with the possibility of dismissal.
- Students should also be guided by codes of ethics most closely associated with the profession and organization of their Internship.
- Students are encouraged to discuss with either the Internship Coordinator or their Faculty any activities they believe may potentially compromise legal or ethical

standards.

- Students may undertake only those program activities explicitly assigned or authorized by host site personnel or the Internship Coordinator.
- Students should immediately report any harassment they might experience while participating in their Internship to the Preceptor, Department Chair, and/or the Internship Coordinator.
- Students must report any unusual or inappropriate behavior by the host agency, personnel, or clients to the Preceptor, Department Chair, and/or the Internship Coordinator.
- Students may not visit clients socially during regular working hours without explicit approval of the Preceptor.
- Students may not correspond with or for clients regarding matters of a professional nature without explicit approval of the Preceptor. If during the course of the Internship, the Preceptor, or the Internship Coordinator determines that a student is having difficulty functioning in a particular setting the student may be reassigned or asked to take time out until the next semester. If a student's behavior is determined to be unprofessional, unethical, or outside the rules of the agency or university, the student may face certain consequences. Depending upon the behavior, the student may be awarded a grade of "F" for the Internship (thus not receiving credit) and/or potentially being dismissed from the program. Likewise, if during the course of the Internship the student deems that their activities are inappropriate or not contributing to their educational experience, the student may request a review of the circumstance by either the Internship Coordinator. If the Internship is determined to be inconsistent with the philosophy or guidelines for Internship experiences, the student will be permitted to affiliate with another agency –if possible- to fulfill the Internship requirement.

Periodic Reports

Each graduate student who completes a MCG Internship must complete a series of Periodic Reports regarding their Internship experiences as required in the Internship Manual. The purpose of the periodic report requirements include:

1. To describe and document activities on an ongoing basis to the Internship coordinator;
2. To provide the basis for developing a presentation to co-workers, faculty and students, if applicable;
3. To document Internship experiences that you may wish to incorporate into

your remaining coursework.

Guidelines: Follow these guidelines in the Internship Manual for preparing and submitting your Periodic Reports. In addition, include the additional requirements noted below.

1. Students must be acutely aware of issues related to patient, client, and organizational confidentiality. Confidential information (to include specific individual names) should not be included in the Periodic Report without explicit consent from the Preceptor. Students should be willing to provide a complete copy of their Periodic Reports to the Preceptor if requested.
2. Periodic Reports should be completed every week or period. This will enable the student to synthesize their experiences while events and activities are still fresh in their mind. In addition, if your Preceptor requires a Periodic Report, the required format may be substituted to serve this purpose.
3. Periodic Reports should be no longer than 1-2 pages, single-spaced, and should be submitted within the Web CT Vista (IMPH 8722 course) as weekly assignments. Periodic reports consist of:

a. Periodic Log:

- List the most important (enlightening) activities of the week or period. Dates and times do not need to be included.
- Students are encouraged to include interesting meetings (committee, board, or individuals), duties assigned, other organizations visited, and any completed training

b. Key Learning Experience:

- Write 1 or 2 paragraphs about a key learning experience of the week or period. Illustrate how this has added to knowledge and relate to the assigned responsibilities or coursework

c. Directed Learning Questions (DLQ) :

- **Week-1** Use the week or period to research Directed Learning Questions through independent observations or conversations with others. Use no more than the total length permitted for the Periodic Reports to discuss answers to the Directed Learning Question of the period DLQs
- **Week 2** Describe the structure of the organization you are

working with. If Possible include an organizational chart and indicate where in the organization your department is located. How did it come to be structured in the way that it is? (i.e. initial development, mergers, acquisitions, joint ventures, etc.)

- **Week 3** Describe the responsibilities and functions of the department or organization. If working in a department, what does the department contribute to the organization as a whole?
- **Week 4** Look at the staffing of the department or organization in which you work. Name (Titles only) the key personnel and look at their current functions in relationship to their training and experience. How did they get to the position they stand today? How much of that do they contribute to having resulted from changes in healthcare in the past 5 years?
- **Week 5** Who are your customers—both internal and external? What external organizations have an impact on the way your department or organization does business? (Regulatory, licensing, accrediting, etc.) List some of the requirements that each places on the department or organization. What are some of the standards used to be in compliance?
- **Week 6** Name the key competitors and collaborators of your organization. What are the opportunities and threats they provide? *Or*, describe the environment your organization functions in—what are the key opportunities and threats to its success?
- **Week 7** What changes in your organization as a whole or with your department have occurred in the past 5 years with increased focus on information and technology?
- **Week 8** Describe a major project you have been involved in. Why was the work you were doing important to the organization? What did you learn from this project that you will take back to your classes and that has contributed to your development?
- **Week 9** Describe your feelings about your Internship. What did you learn about yourself? What do you see as your strengths and weaknesses? What additional development do you need that you should try to arrange for next year? Discuss your preparation for the experience and the value you see in it.

Information for Preceptors

Objectives for a Standard Internship

The role of the Preceptor is a highly valued one in our MPH program. We hope to build an ongoing relationship between you, the Preceptor, your host site organization, and our programs, along with current and future students. A planned, supervised and evaluated field placement experience is a very important element of MCG professional degree programs. Classroom learning alone is not sufficient preparation. The student must have an opportunity to participate in and observe the actual conduct of public health and health service professionals. As a practicing health professional, you have the opportunity, through our Internship program, to guide and shape the preparation and education of a future public health professional. The goal of a student's Internship is to provide the opportunity to acquire skills and experience in the application of basic concepts and specialty knowledge to the solution of health problems.

- The overall objectives of the Internship experience are to:
- Enhance students' knowledge of basic public health and health services practices.
- Increase student self-confidence as a professional in the public health arena.
- Increase students' awareness of the complexity of public health and health care issues and concerns.
- Provide an opportunity for students to apply the public health training they have covered in their courses.
- Increase students' appreciation of information management in diverse settings served by public health and health services professionals.
- Facilitate increased understanding of the relationships among public health organizations, other health service organizations, and governmental entities.

- Develop opportunities for references, job opportunities, and professional contacts.
- Afford opportunities to provide valuable service(s) to the host site organization by participating in and/or completing projects or other work assignments. It is not expected that every Internship experience will serve or accomplish all of these overall objectives. Indeed, it would be an unusual experience that would encompass all of them. However, it is expected that the Internship experience will include many, if not most of these objectives.

The specific objectives for the Internship that relate to these overall programmatic objectives occurs during the collaborative process between you (the Preceptor), and the student and his/her while developing a WORK PLAN (see below).

Expectations for Preceptors

In your role as a Preceptor, we ask that you guide the student's experience in a supportive and professionally stimulating environment. During the Internship you will serve as a professional role model to the student and facilitate the student's identification with the profession. Your Preceptor role is similar to that of a work supervisor and employee with the addition of a strong educational focus. However, your role as a Preceptor is larger than just the time the student is under your direction. Your involvement begins before the actual experience, and extends beyond the time the student is with you.

During the Internship

Once the student begins the Internship, please assure that the student is oriented to your organization. If you are paying the student, make sure that payroll procedures and work expectations are clearly understood (e.g.: time cards, procedures for tardiness and absences, hours of work, workman's compensation insurance, etc.). If the student needs specific training offered by your organization, you should see to it that the training is made available.

Review the WORK PLAN with the student and make arrangements for the student to have regular contact with or access to you or your designee. We ask that you provide the student with adequate space, supplies, and computing resources to perform his/her Internship activities. Typically these resources are modest; nevertheless, the student should be able to produce and store his/her work in a secure area as well as receive and send mail, phone, and e-mail messages. The student is responsible for returning all supplies, materials, and computing resources provided by your organization prior to or immediately upon the completion of the Internship. The student must obtain your permission to keep copies of any of your organization's reports, data, correspondence, or other related material. As called for in the WORK PLAN, if feasible, we ask that you provide opportunities for the student to attend a variety of board, group, community, or

other appropriate meetings. If practical, provide the student the opportunity to observe the relationship between your organization and other local, regional, and/or national organizations. Provide opportunities for the student to become familiar with the relationships between your organization, its constituents, clientele, community, and/or specific populations served. At the end of the Internship, we hope you will meet with the student to evaluate his/her performance, and provide valuable feedback on his/her activities and overall professionalism.

We also ask that you complete the MCG the Preceptor Evaluation Form in our web-based evaluation system, One45. More information will be provided to you at the time on submitting the evaluation form electronically. If appropriate, feel free to write a letter of recommendation for the student. A well-written letter at this time may prevent numerous requests for recommendation in the future. Your letter will be very useful to the student during his/her search for future employment opportunities. If, at any time during the Internship, there is any issue or concern relating to the student's performance, ethical or professional conduct, please contact the Internship Coordinator or the student's immediately.

After the Internship

We hope following this experience you will want to maintain contact with MCG faculty regarding future opportunities for other students, ways to improve the student experience or contribution to your organization, and other mutual interests. Keep in touch with the Internship Coordinator or other faculty regarding requests for students to assist with meeting your organization's specific needs. This may include requests for students with specific skills to assist with forthcoming projects.

Ethical and Performance Concerns

The following are guidelines given to all MCG students regarding our expectations for their proper ethical conduct during their Internship. We select students into our program based, in part, on their integrity and strength of character. However, we also recognize that these are students and are in the process of learning about professional standards for ethical behavior. As Preceptor, you must join us in assuring that students understand the importance of ethical behavior and, to the extent possible, work collaboratively with us if any issue or concern with professional standards or ethics arises during an Internship experience.

Ethical Guidelines provided to Students:

- Any and all information related to clients of the host agency are to remain confidential.
- Students must follow standards of academic integrity as outlined in the Graduate Student Handbook. Any student identified as having engaged in any acts of academic dishonesty (including, but not limited to, copying

information available through the worksite and presenting it as the student's own work to either representatives of the host organization or the Faculty) while engaged in Internship activities will be subject to the same review process with the possibility of dismissal.

- Students should also be guided by codes of ethics most closely associated with the profession and organization of their Internship.
- Students are encouraged to discuss with either the Internship Coordinator or their Faculty any activities they believe may potentially compromise legal or ethical standards.
- Students may undertake only those program activities explicitly assigned or authorized by host site personnel or the Internship Coordinator.
- Students should immediately report any harassment they might experience while participating in their Internship to the Preceptor, Department Chair, and/or the Internship Coordinator.
- Students must report any unusual or inappropriate behavior by the host agency, personnel, or clients to the Preceptor, Department Chair, and/or the Internship Coordinator.
- Students may not visit clients socially during regular working hours without explicit approval of the Preceptor.
- Students may not correspond with or for clients regarding matters of a professional nature without explicit approval of the Preceptor.

Performance Concerns

If during the course of the Internship, the Preceptor, or the Internship Coordinator determines that a student is having difficulty functioning in a particular setting the student may be reassigned or asked to take time out until the next semester. If a student's behavior is determined to be unprofessional, unethical, or outside the rules of the agency or university, the student may face certain consequences. Depending upon the behavior, the student may be awarded a grade of "F" for the Internship (thus not receiving credit) and/or potentially being dismissed from the program. Likewise, if during the course of the Internship the student deems that their activities are inappropriate or not contributing to their educational experience, the student may request a review of the circumstance by either the Internship Coordinator. If the Internship is determined to be inconsistent with the philosophy or guidelines for Internship experiences, the student will be permitted to affiliate with another agency to fulfill the Internship requirement.