EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING HANDBOOK

College of Applied Health Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Table of Contents

What is Experiential Learning?.....3
Purpose of this Handbook.....4
Learning that is Considered “Experiential” Contains the following elements: 4
How to Find an Experiential Learning Experience.....4
Portrait of a Successful Experiential Learning Experience 5
A Successful Experiential Learning Experience is:.....5
What Does a Successful Experience Look Like to the Student? 6
What does a Successful Internship Look Like to the Site Supervisor? 6
What Does a Successful Experiential Learning Experience Look Like to the College of AHS staff? 7
Professional Guidelines.....7
Professional Guidelines and Safeguards for Behavior and Performance 7
At the Office/Site:..... 8
Maximizing The Experience 9
Meeting Etiquette..... 9
Goals and Objectives..... 10
Communication..... 11
Accountability.....11
Examples of modifications or accommodations:.....12
Problem Resolution During Experiential Learning.....12
Students Experiencing Problems During their Placement 12
Resolution Process.....13
Performance Problems of Students In A Placement.....13
Examples of Performance Issues 13
Review Process 14
What to Do When You (Student) Have Overcommitted Yourself..... 15
Students Terminating Placement..... 15
What to do at the End of the Experience.....15
FAQ’s 16
Helpful Links.....18

Mission

One of the strategic goals of the University of Illinois is to encourage students to complete an internship, capstone, or other learning experience. Every department in the College of Applied Health Sciences encourages—and, in many cases, requires—students to gain exposure to experiential learning through a field placement, either at the undergraduate or graduate level.

Each year, hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students in the College of Applied Health Sciences gain professional experience through external placements. Bachelor's degree programs in community health, interdisciplinary health sciences, and recreation, sport and tourism include internships among their graduation requirements. Graduate students in speech and hearing science, public health, health administration, and health technology must complete external placements and capstone projects with professional partners.

Each of these requirements is designed to give students real-world, hands-on experience that helps them transition from the university to the workforce. Internships also give students the opportunity to apply the knowledge they've gained from their studies, and to bring fresh perspectives to the organizations with which they work.

What is Experiential Learning?

Experiential learning at the College of Applied Health Sciences comes in many forms, including clinicals, practicums, co-ops, internships, study abroad excursions, capstones, and community volunteering. These experiences will be of great benefit to students as they seek to develop their skills, network, and contextual knowledge.

It is essential in health sciences that students engage in educational experiences outside coursework to increase their overall knowledge. By getting out of the classroom and into a professional setting, students can develop hands-on skills in real-world scenarios. This approach will give students practice with in-depth reflection and guidance of how to apply this knowledge in the future.

Experiential learning opportunities provide a critically important experience to gain insights from the field. By engaging students in hands-on activities and reflection, they are better able to connect theories and knowledge learned in the classroom to real-world situations.

Learning through experience, or, learning-by-doing, engages students on multiple levels—intellectual, social, political, spiritual, and physical—and so results in a richer experience than traditional learning models (such as memorization and examination) might provide. These experiences may feel more authentic—and therefore more relevant and valuable—to students. In this way, students can be more motivated and more inclined to take a direct hand in their own learning processes.

Purpose of this Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to clarify the requirements, policies, and details of experiential learning for the College of Applied Health Sciences and the responsibilities of the parties who are involved. Each learning experience is a four-way partnership with the student, the site supervisor who is providing the learning opportunity, academic department and the College of Applied Health Sciences. As noted above, experiential learning can come in many forms. The main goal with any Experiential Learning Activity is to "Learn by Doing".

Learning that is Considered "Experiential" Contains the following elements:

- Opportunities for students to engage intellectually, creatively, emotionally, socially, or physically.
- Reflection, critical analysis, and synthesis.
- Opportunities for students to take initiative, make decisions, and be accountable for the results.
- A designed learning experience that includes the possibility to learn from natural consequences, mistakes, and successes.

How to Find an Experiential Learning Experience

Hundreds of AHS students find placements every year for their experiential learning experiences. To make finding placements easier we have compiled a list of sites that already have a contract with the University and have been vetted as great learning experience sites for students in Applied Health Sciences.

Here are just a few of our sites:

National Alliance on Mental Illness
University of Michigan
Urbana Park District
Chicago Sky, WNBA
L'Affaire Musical Inc.
Northwestern Memorial
Illinois Department of Public Health
Central Illinois Hearing
Hilton Head Island Recreation Association
Center for Food Allergy and Asthma Research
US Army Corps of Engineers
Feeding America
Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago
Turkish Football Federation

Speak with your advisor or course instructor about sites as early as possible. They will be able to recommend sites based on your major/concentration. The process itself, especially with a brand-new site that we haven't partnered with before, can take time. There are forms that will need to be signed by the site supervisor as well as you, the student but the first step would be applying/interviewing at a site. During the interview with the site is a good time to speak with a site supervisor and "interview" the site to see if they are a good fit for your overall college goals as well as your specific goals for the experience.

Portrait of a Successful Experiential Learning Experience

A Successful Experiential Learning Experience is:

Measured by the student's success at performing the responsibilities of the external placement and developing professional competencies gained through a real-world working experience. This success enables the student to build meaningful work experience,

strengthen resumes, and many times attract the employer's interest in hiring them after graduation.

What Does a Successful Experience Look Like to the Student?

The experiences students have at sites could become the foundation of their professional development and can help them discover their future career. With that in mind:

For some students, this may be the only experiential learning experience before graduation. As such, the experience provides a critically important opportunity to gain insights from outside the classroom. Additionally, the external placement provides an opportunity for professional development and for the student to solidify their career goals.

- For the student it's important to think through their overall college goals:
    - Where does the student want to be in 5-10 years? What needs to be accomplished in the next 2-5 to get there? What is the short-term goal for this learning experience?
- Go over University requirements:
    - What course requirements does the student need to meet before starting? Does the experience meet the requirements needed for course/certification credit?
    - Is there a background check or vaccination status needed for the site?
    - Has the student confirmed with the college intermediary that the experience will be beneficial and appropriate for the course of study?

What does a Successful Internship Look Like to the Site Supervisor?

The Supervisor should take an active role in mentoring and guiding the student to help meet learning goals. That can include:

- Overall supervision of the internship experience.
- Work with the Student to identify relevant and meaningful projects and/or goals to be completed during the experience.
- Meet regularly to discuss progress, problems, and questions.
- Allow the Student to attend meetings that the Employer is attending, when feasible.
- Communicate with the college intermediary if problems or concerns arise.

- Complete two evaluations: one at the midpoint of the learning experience and one at the end of the experience. These forms should be reviewed with and provided to the Student
- The Site Supervisor should be available for meetings/conversations with both the student and AHS coordinator

What Does a Successful Experiential Learning Experience Look Like to the College of AHS staff?

- College of AHS Staff serve as facilitators/support to the student during experiential learning experience
- College staff will evaluate the external placement. They will ensure that the learning experience is well-structured and offers benefits. Additionally, staff will confirm that the experience itself is developed from an educational perspective.
- College staff will ensure any prerequisites are met before the student begins their Experiential Learning Experience
- The college staff is there to be a resource to students, specifically assisting with professionalism best practices.

Professional Guidelines

Professional Guidelines and Safeguards for Behavior and Performance

Schedule and Attendance: Students should plan for and commit to the schedule they will be keeping with their placement during the placement's standard operating hours. Maintaining a reliable schedule with dependable attendance is important.

Attire: Students should wear attire that is suitable for the placement at which they are working. This attire may not be the same as what is allowed in the classroom; students will be expected to follow the company's policy for attire. If in doubt, please discuss with a supervisor, Internship Coordinator, or the Coordinator of Internships.

Policies: Students will be expected to know and follow the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook, their specific program handbook and with any applicable policies and procedures of the organization at which they are placed.

Equality and Diversity: The College of Applied Health Sciences is an equal access/equal opportunity institution committed to excellence through diversity in education and employment. The College complies with all state and federal laws granting rights to students, employees, and applicants for employment or admission to the College. The College prohibits unlawful discrimination based on race, color, national origin, creed, ethnicity, sex, age, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, veteran status, genetic information, or disability in any of its employment policies or practices, educational programs, or activities.

At the Office/Site:

- Be Professional.
  - Dress professionally.
  - Be responsible and reliable
- Be a self-starter.
  - Figure out what needs to be done and do it.
  - Take initiative when you can; ask for guidance if you are uncertain.
- Have a set schedule with your Site Supervisor and report to work when scheduled
  - Make sure you know what to do when you arrive at work and how to log your hours.
  - Develop a schedule that contains the hours you plan to work on your learning experience each week. This schedule should work with your class schedule, as well as any other obligations, and total 20-25 hours per week, most of which must take place during normal business hours. This schedule should be the same from week to week. (Please see the FAQ section for how to create such a schedule).
  - **Give advance notice** if you cannot make your hours due to sickness, an exam, or for any other reason. Email your site supervisor to let them know that you will not accomplish your scheduled hours that day.
  - When requesting days off, give notification at least 3 business days in advance.
- Keep the site supervisor informed on what you are working on.

Maximizing The Experience

Ask Questions: As a student you can engage with professionals in a way you may not be able to once out in the career force. Asking questions to clarify your experience and understand the field you are working in will help you to engage in more interactions within your internship environment. By asking a question, you are building the knowledge you will need in the future and forming relationships with industry professionals.

Develop Professional Relationships: Building a professional network is a part of finding out about opportunities in the future. By taking the time to connect with people in your office, you are developing relationships that over time can be beneficial toward your future career. It is much easier to build connections with someone when you are at the internship site than once your learning experience is completed.

Conduct Informational Interviews: Informational interviewing is an important skill to develop and one you will utilize throughout your career. By doing an informational interview, you should be able to gather information about an occupation or an industry, learn more about a career that you might like to do (education, skills, experience required, challenges, etc.), clarify and confirm your career choice, make contacts, and expand your professional network.

Meeting Etiquette

- Do not have phones out unless specifically stating why you have it out (paying meter, taking notes on it)
- Only take notes during the meeting, do not work on the project while your client is there
- Do not send emails during meetings
- Be prompt in arriving to a meeting
- Present yourself and your work in a positive manner
- Listen, take notes and ask clarifying questions. Try to not waste time by coming to a meeting unprepared

Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives should provide the framework for any experiential learning placement. Setting personal goals at the beginning of your experiential learning experience can help you to better advocate for your needs with a supervisor. By being able to explain your goals, you will be able to articulate what you hope to get out of your experience and are more likely to walk away with the experience you expected.

Creating your own goals will help you with assignments, feeling accomplished in your learning experience and will allow you to communicate to your future employer specific skills and experiences you acquired.

- Create 3-5 Goals and Objectives.
    - Make them specific to this experience but also think about your overall College goals. What skill sets are you wanting to work on?
- If you get stuck, use your position description for inspiration.

These goals should follow the **"SMART"** goal format. A **SMART** goal is defined as one that is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound.

- **Specific**: Goals should be simplistically written and clearly define what you are going to do. The What, Why and How of your goals.
- **Measurable**: Goals should be measurable so that you have tangible evidence that you accomplished the goal. Usually, the entire goal statement is a measure of the project you will be working on, but there are usually several short term or smaller measurements built into the goal.
- **Achievable**: Goals should be achievable within the time frame of your internship. They should stretch you slightly out of your comfort zone but be defined well enough that you can achieve them. When you plan steps wisely and establish a timeframe you can meet almost any goal.
- **Relevant**: Goals should measure outcomes, not activities. They also should follow along with your position description or the work you will be doing for that semester.
- **Time-bound**: Goals should be linked to a timeframe that creates a practical sense of urgency or results in tension between the current reality and the vision of the goal. The time doesn't always need to be a semester long. It could be a mid-semester goal or a first week of the internship goal. However, without a little tension the goal is unlikely to produce a positive outcome.

- Here is an additional resource if you wish to explore this concept further.

Communication

Communication with your site supervisor and your internship coordinator is crucial to a successful experiential learning experience. A lot of communication will happen via email.

- Your email should include: salutation, intro, purpose/details, closing, and signature
- Make sure to use your @illinois.edu email and respond promptly.
- Due to the frequency of email communication, it is vital that you regularly, at least every day, check your email—including on breaks—and read each message carefully.

Below is an example of a professional email template:

Hello/Dear (Person),

This is a sentence containing a greeting and well-wish of some sort. This next sentence is introducing yourself (if relevant). Now is the purpose of this email.

This paragraph goes into more detail about what is needed. For instance, this sentence discusses important information, such as how soon an answer is needed, the kind of answer needed, or any other information important to this situation. It is a good idea to break up the text with another paragraph if there is a lot of text.

This paragraph is to restate the initial request/purpose as a closing. Now to finish with a platitude, such as a "thank you for your time."

Closing salutation,
Signature

Accountability

As a student, you are making a commitment to do your best work. Your site is depending on you; as such, accountability is a priority.

Communication: Keep the supervisor informed of progress; talk honestly and professionally with them if you are experiencing any difficulties. Keep the Internship Coordinator and/or Coordinator of Internships also informed of any concerns or difficulties you experience during your placement so we can assist you in troubleshooting the situation professionally.

Accommodations: Students in need of accommodations to successfully complete assignments need to inform the Internship Coordinator upon initiation of the internship. The student may also be asked to inform their site supervisor of any accommodations or modifications that are needed.

Examples of modifications or accommodations:

- making existing facilities accessible
- tasks restructuring
- part-time or modified internship schedule
- acquiring or modifying equipment
- changing tests, training materials, or policies
- providing qualified readers or interpreters
- reassignment to a vacant position
- medical leave
- work at home

Problem Resolution During Experiential Learning

Students Experiencing Problems During their Placement

We encourage students and supervisors to work together to find satisfying solutions to issues. The student is welcome to contact their internship coordinator or the Coordinator of Internship Programs to help with communication or questions about how to resolve an issue themselves.

However, occasionally a problem requires special attention. Students should inform the College of any of the following:

- Placement site is unable to provide adequate supervision following the agreed upon level of supervision that the student should receive.
- Significant changes or problems in assignments/tasks/projects that affect the student's learning plan.
- Discrimination, including sexual harassment (See discrimination statement.)
- Concerns with safety

Resolution Process

1. The AHS Internship Coordinator will meet with the student to:
    - Identify the nature of the issue(s).
    - Discuss resolution options.
    - Support and encourage the student to address the issue with the supervisor (if applicable) In most cases the problems are resolved at this point. However, issues of a serious nature may require immediate intervention by the coordinator.

2. If the problem(s) continue, the coordinator will act as a mediator between the student and their supervisor. This usually warrants a meeting between the student, coordinator, and the supervisor. If this is not possible, the unit director may be asked to intervene.

3. If a resolution is not possible, the student may be placed at another site. This rarely occurs and the College takes as many measures as possible to promote continuity of placement.

Performance Problems of Students In A Placement

Experiential learning is a unique experience for each individual and involves educational objectives for the student, as well as professional responsibilities to clients, organizations, and the community. A student's educational responsibility is to utilize ongoing feedback from their coordinator and supervisor. Students providing services are expected to fulfill ongoing professional, educational, and ethical responsibilities.

Successful experiential learning requires a commitment by the student, the supervisor and coordinator/faculty. Thus, it is important to recognize and respond early to performance problems of students, particularly those of a serious nature.

Examples of Performance Issues

- Inadequate concern and sensitivity for human needs, inflexibility, inappropriate attitudes toward diversity and/or inclusivity.
- Failure to demonstrate professional assertiveness.
- Failure to recognize and resolve ethical conflicts and dilemmas within the applied science framework
- Failure to prioritize duties, responsibilities, and complete assignments.
- Advocating change in a non-productive manner and outside of the learning site's policies.

• Unsatisfactory progress towards completing learning objectives and insufficient development and demonstration of competencies.
• Lack of professional behavior, such as not arriving to work on time and staying until the designated end time, lack of initiative and preparedness, inappropriate use of cell phones at work.
• Violation of Code of Ethics.

Review Process

1. Supervisors are expected to bring the concerns to the student's attention and attempt to resolve the issue through conversation with the student.

2. Supervisors should notify the coordinator of any issues related to the student's performance in the Placement and the plan to address the identified problem.

3. If deemed necessary, the instructor will assist the supervisor in addressing the problem directly with the student.

4. A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) will be developed which will include:

    • Description of the performance areas of concern
    • Competencies that are not being adequately developed
    • Strengths the student exhibits
    • Specific activities to remediate the deficiencies
    • Available resources within the site to assist the student
    • A timeframe for review of the student's progress
    • Steps to be taken if the student does not meet the progress requirement within the specified timeframe

5. It is the Site Supervisor and Coordinator of Internships responsibility to document the student's progress and performance.

6. There will be a follow-up meeting(s) with the coordinator, site supervisor, the Coordinator of Internship Programs, and the student to review the student's progress, and to discuss the steps to be taken, contingent upon the progress made by the student.

What to Do When You (Student) Have Overcommitted Yourself

During the semester, if a student realizes they have overcommitted themselves, it is their responsibility to reach out to their advisor and/or college contact. ***Withdrawing from a course-credit bearing internship will likely result in extension of their academic program. Students must consult with their advisor/coordinator before making any determinations regarding their internship.**

- Schedule a meeting with either the faculty whose course is giving credit for the internship or the advisor to discuss the situation, as there may be other options.
    - If the student is taking the internship for course credit, decide what the next steps will be going forward so that the student's graduation date will not be delayed.

Students Terminating Placement

Students may not unilaterally terminate or change their placement. A coordinator or faculty must be involved in all placement decisions. Students who withdraw from their placements must also withdraw from and retake the course. Withdrawing from a course-credit bearing internship will likely result in extension of their academic program. Students must consult with their advisor/coordinator before making any determinations regarding their internship. If a student withdraws from a placement without college approval, the student will not be allowed to re-enter placement or re-enroll in the course for at least one semester.

What to do at the End of the Experience

1) Write a Thank you Note
    a) Write a thank you note to your site supervisor and anyone else you consistently encountered. It helps them remember you in a positive light and keeps a line of communication open
2) Ask your supervisor if you can use them as a reference.
    a) Always ask if someone is willing to be a positive reference before putting them down as a reference.

3) Revisit your Goals
    a) What did you accomplish? What was something you didn't meet goal wise?
4) Update your Resume
    a) Take your experience and add it to your resume. Using your goals/learning plan, decide what to include in your resume from the new skills you have come away with.
    b) Update your LinkedIn Profile, if you don't already have a profile, it's time to create one.
5) Testimonial and Alumni Panels
    a) Consider giving a testimonial to our Marketing department or coming back to be on an alumni panel to talk about your experience.

FAQ's

Here is a list of commonly asked questions we receive:

- How do I create a schedule?
    - Create your schedule. Add in when your classes are, as well as any other immovable obligations. From there, create a minimum of 4-8 hour blocks during which you will work on your internship. As a reminder, these blocks must total 15-25 hours per week depending on how many hours are needed for your internship. This schedule should <u>not</u> vary from week to week.
- Can I work remotely?
    - Almost all clients will require you to work on site.
- Can I work on weekends?
    - The purpose of the program is to acclimate you to a professional environment. As such, you are expected to work during normal business hours. Some flexibility may be allowed with certain projects and supervisors.
- What do I wear to work/Is there a dress code?
    - Some clients will expect professional attire. Each site will be unique so please speak with your site supervisor about appropriate work wear.
- What do I do if I am sick or out of town?

    - Email your site supervisor as soon as possible to let them know you cannot attend your scheduled work hours. If possible, give an approximation of when you will return.

    - If you know you will be out of town in advance, request the time off from your site supervisor at least 3 business days prior.

- I feel overwhelmed, and don't know what to do. Help??

    - Schedule a time to meet with a coordinator/advisor/director or your site supervisor to figure out your options. Before scheduling a time, think through your challenges and what has you feeling overwhelmed. Write down the challenges and see what things you can change on your own (personal life, homework) and what challenges you might need help with (internship isn't a good fit, co-worker issues)

- How do I put this internship on my resume?

    - The Career Center hosts resume consultations. In addition, your advisor can help assist you on how to include everything you learned during your internship on your resume.

- Am I required to purchase liability insurance?

    - Some sites provide insurance or the contract you have with the University and placement might have insurance as well. If you are in a paid position, then you are not covered under the Universities' liability insurance and might want to get your own.

- Do field sites require background checks that I will have to pay for?

    - Most field sites will not require you to have a background check. If yours does, please talk to your advisor or internship coordinator for help on how to set that up.

Helpful Links

MPH: **MPH Admissions**

MPH Handbook

MHA: **MSHA Admissions**

MHA Handbook

MS-HT: **Nicole Holtzclaw-Stone**

MS-HT Handbook

RST: **Terri Daniels**

RST Handbook

SHS: **Noa Hannah**

SHS Handbook

CHLH: **Caitlin Vitosky Clarke**

CHLH Handbook

IHLT: **Beth Frasca, Kristen DiFilippo**

The following documents provided context and language for this Handbook:

NACE Webpage, Kinesiology and Community Health Handbook, Masters of Health Administration Handbook, Audiology Clinical Handbook, Master of Science in Health Technology Student Handbook, Master of Public Health Handbook, Career Center Webpage