

Penn State - Berks  
Applied Psychology  
Guidelines for Internships **effective 8/09**

In order to secure the most positive and beneficial internship, these guidelines must be followed. They will ensure your safety, help you to obtain adequate supervision, follow ethical principles and observe appropriate professional boundaries, and generally allow you to make the most of your internship experience. They should also serve to clarify frequently asked questions regarding internship locations, internship criteria, and internship credit hours.

**A. Choice of internship supervisor**

1. Talk to your faculty supervisor (instructor of the class) about your proposed internship location and activities. In order to determine whether or not the internship location and activities are suitable, you should be able to answer the following questions. Please note that in all cases, final judgments are made by your Penn State faculty supervisor. These judgments may be made in either direction (approval or disapproval) depending upon individual circumstances.

**a. Who will be your supervisor?**

- i. **Clinical Setting:** A clinical setting is defined as a setting in which psychosocial or mental disorders are prevented, evaluated, or treated, or one in which individuals with clinical disorders or problems are likely to be encountered (e.g., talk lines; support groups). This also includes settings that involve individuals with a history of, or current, high-risk or self-destructive behaviors, the experience of abuse, those in a state of crisis, or those from various at-risk groups. One of the following personnel must be on staff and agree to be your supervisor:
  - Licensed Psychologist
  - Licensed or Certified Social Worker
  - Licensed Professional Counselor
  - Certified Addictions Counselor
  - Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
  - Certified Behavior Specialist (e.g., for TSS work)
- ii. **Forensic Setting:** A forensic setting is defined as a setting pertaining to the justice system, including courts of law, and probation or detention settings. One of the following personnel must agree to be your supervisor:
  - An individual with a professional degree (e.g., JD)
  - An individual with a Master's degree in a related field
  - The most senior member of the department.

- iii. **Educational Setting:** An educational setting is defined as a setting in which individuals receive instruction, social skills, or vocational training. However, the activities for an internship must represent those of applied educational psychology. Appropriate examples might include an understanding of psychological testing and IEP development, research or best practices in pedagogy and instructional methods, social or life skills training with individuals with MR, learning disabilities, emotional or behavioral support needs, or work related to that of a guidance counselor. One of the following personnel must agree to be your supervisor:
- School Psychologist
  - Certified Guidance (School) Counselor
  - In some cases, a certified special education teacher, certified behavior specialist, or an individual with a graduate degree in educational psychology may be approved as an appropriate supervisor
- iv. **Industrial/Organizational setting:** An industrial/organizational setting is defined as any company, trade union, labor organization or other organization that provides goods or services including those pertaining to manufacturing, personnel or trade. One of the following personnel must agree to be your supervisor:
- The senior member of the department in which you will be working.
  - An individual with management experience and formal training in human resources or some other psychologically related area.
- v. **Research setting:** A research setting is defined as activities including IRB-approved data collection, data entry, data analysis, literature review, manuscript preparation, and/or conference preparation. The following personnel must agree to be your supervisor:
- In general, a full time faculty member or research staff member at a college, university, or acceptable research facility who leads the project.
  - Currently, the only research internships that will be approved will be “on campus” internships with psychology faculty in the supervisory role.
  - Research internships will only be acceptable for PSYCH 495B, C, or D (not A).
  - Summer research internships are rare, and can only take place with full agreement of the faculty research supervisor and the internship instructor. Supervision may take place “off campus” for summer research internships, at the instructor’s discretion.

**b. Will your supervisor be able to provide you with the required amount and nature of supervision?**

vi. 1 hour for every 30 hours of internship. For example, if a student is working for 15 hours a week for 10 weeks to complete 150 total hours of internship, there must be one hour of supervision bi-weekly. Put another way, for every 150 hours of internship activity, 5 total hours must be devoted to supervision.

- Half of this time needs to be one-on-one with your supervisor (e.g., 15 min per week in the above example).
- Half of the required time for supervision can take place in small group sessions, if approved by the instructor. For example, this might include case conferences, interdisciplinary team meetings, or a staff meeting where the supervisor leads the meeting. (15 min per week in the above example)
- The required supervision must take place within each 30 hour block of time- it can not be delayed, “put off” until later, or conducted “ahead of time”

vii. Formal, one-on-one supervision can represent a variety of approaches, including developmental, skill-based, or solution-based. The overall ideal is that you receive direction, support, education, and constructive criticism regarding your performance and development as a student intern. “Live,” videotape, or audiotape review of your work is encouraged.

**c. Are you sure that you are not likely to have a dual relationship with the person who is to be your supervisor?**

- i. Clear problems exist in relation to any supervisor who is a relative, friend, or past or present romantic interest.
- ii. Clear problems with dual relationships exist in relation to any supervisor who is a designated “support person” for you.
- iii. Also see “B” below in relation to paid internships and supervision, where your boss should not be your direct supervisor.

**d. Are you sure that you do not, or will not, have a dual relationship with any patients, clients, or consumers?**

- iv. For example, it would NOT be appropriate to serve on a talk line, counseling, crisis intervention, or any other service that involves Penn State students as probable clients or consumers.
- v. Please note that in research internships, it is acceptable to collect and analyze data from Penn State students as long as you are identified and approved as a research assistant in the study’s IRB application.

**B. Internship hours and compensation**

1. You are not permitted to work more than 40 hours per week towards your internship.
2. Paid internships are desirable from a professional perspective and in relation to labor law and policies. As paid internships can be problematical, you will need permission of the faculty supervisor for any internship that is compensated.
3. If you are permitted to be compensated for your internship, your boss should not be your direct supervisor.
  - a For example, if working in a school district, your boss might be the principal, but your supervisor could be a department head. This is to protect you – to ensure, for example, that you are not forced to work a double shift or to undertake inappropriate activities during your dual status as an employee and intern.

**C. Type of internship**

1. Whether or not an internship site is acceptable is ultimately the decision of the faculty supervisor. However, questions frequently arise about the following types of internships:
  - a **Summer camps:**
    - i. If the summer camp will provide appropriate supervision by a trained and/or licensed supervisor, you can demonstrate that the work will provide a sufficient learning experience for you in the field of psychology, and appropriate camp training and safety policies (including those listed below) are in place, then a summer camp may be acceptable for an internship. Some examples of appropriate summer camp experiences might include a camp designed for children with special needs, a camp designed specifically to increase the self-esteem of girls from at-risk backgrounds, or a camp designed for children who have experienced the loss a parent or close relative.
  - b **Therapeutic Support Work (TSS):**
    - i. If the agency you will be working with can provide appropriate training for you, can provide supervision by a Certified Behavior Specialist, and meet the safety policy criteria (below), then TSS work may be approved for an internship.
  - c **Nursing homes:**
    - i. It is important to engage in work that is psychological in nature (e.g., learning how to conduct resident mental status or functional assessments; co-leading support groups). If the nursing home can provide appropriate supervision by senior, psychiatric nursing staff, a licensed social worker, or licensed counselor/psychologist, and if the facility can meet the safety policy criteria (below), then nursing home work may be approved for an internship.

2. It is essential that you are not expected or permitted to engage in activities that are beyond your scope of practice, supervision, or training. For example, no intern in our program is allowed to engage in individual psychotherapy with a patient, client, or consumer, or lead group therapy sessions.
  - a It is your responsibility to speak up if you feel that you have been asked to engage in an activity that is beyond your scope of practice, supervision, or training.
  - b Note: In some circumstances, an intern may be permitted to co-lead a therapy group with their supervisor or other licensed clinician.
3. With permission of the instructor, ‘shadowing’ may be acceptable as an initial internship experience (PSYCH 495 A). Under no circumstances will a student be permitted to ‘shadow’ for more than PSYCH A.

#### **D. Safety policy**

1. Your safety is the most important aspect of any work on any internship. We require that internship sites can demonstrate the following:
  - a A safety or security plan which outlines the steps to be taken and the responsibilities of key personnel, in the event of an incident.
  - b Documentation of appropriate training practices, including how you will be trained to fulfill the responsibilities of your internship, and how you will be made aware of the safety or security plan.
  - c Confirmation that you will not be alone at any time with a minor client or client’s relative/guardian.
  - d Confirmation that you will not be required to transport clients in your own vehicle, without appropriate training and insurance coverage.
  - e A written explanation of why the internship location is exempt from having a safety policy, if applicable. For example, if you will be conducting data analysis and assisting in writing manuscripts for your internship, your supervisor can provide a statement that explains why a safety policy is unnecessary.

#### **E. Combining internship sections**

1. Students are discouraged from “doubling up” at one location during a fall semester or spring semester. Exceptional students in extraordinary circumstances may be permitted to “double up” at one location for a more in-depth experience during their internship sequence of PSYCH 495 C and D. Combining any other field experience of internship sections is not permitted.
2. Students who are considering combining sections must first seek the approval of the faculty supervisor.
3. Students who are considering combining sections must expect to do twice the coursework (as per individual course syllabi) as well as twice the hours on site.
4. Exceptional students during a summer session (total 6 credit course load) who receive the instructor’s approval may combine PSYCH 495 sections B/C or C/D.
5. “Doubling up” at two different locations/placements is not permitted.

**F. Deadline for contractual agreement**

1. Students are expected to have their contracts completed, signed, and approved by the faculty member teaching the internship course by the deadline given in the prior semester. Required paperwork must have been approved *before the semester begins*. This process will ensure that you are able to receive a quality experience, and that you have the sufficient time to complete your internship during the semester.

**G. Conflict of Interest**

1. A conflict of interest (between the student's private interests vs. the responsibilities of being an intern) can affect the choice of site as well as the choice of internship supervisor. Just as there can be no dual relationship with the person who is to be your supervisor, and there can be no dual relationship with any patients, clients, or consumers, there can be no conflict of interest of any type concerning the site, the supervisor or those who are patients, clients or consumers at the site.
  - a. Clear problems exist in relation to being at a site when a person who is a relative, friend, or past or present romantic interest is employed, has a business interest, is a client or in any other way has interactions with the site that may in any way affect your learning experience, duties or evaluation at the site.
  - b. Clear problems exist in relation to a site when there is any designated "support person" present at the site.
  - c. Problems also exist when the student attempts to cultivate a concurrent or future business relationship with the site or with those who have any type of relationship with the site.
  - d. Please note that faculty may be conducting research at different organizations in the community. In research internships, it is acceptable to collect and analyze data from sites and those people associated with the site as long as you are identified and approved as a research assistant in the study's IRB application.
2. In order to approve a site, among other criteria, the instructor needs to determine whether or not the internship placement is suitable. If there is any question on what may constitute a conflict of interest, talk to your faculty supervisor (instructor of the class) about your proposed internship site, and disclose any pertinent conflict of interest information before the site selection is made. Please note that in all cases, final judgment regarding appropriateness of an internship site is made by your Penn State faculty supervisor. Judgment of appropriateness requires full disclosure. If a conflict of interest is revealed after you begin an internship, the faculty supervisor has final determination regarding immediate termination of the internship.