



THE GERONTOLOGY INTERNSHIP HANDBOOK

TOWSON UNIVERSITY
GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	page 1
The Gerontology Program at Towson University.....	page 2
The Successful Internship The Internship Process The Learning Objectives	
Responsibilities of the Student Intern.....	page 6
Responsibilities of the Gerontology Program.....	page 13
Responsibilities of the Host Agency/Organization.....	page 17
Copies of Forms to be Used During the Internship.....	page 21

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INTRODUCTION

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The purpose of this Handbook is to provide information to both the student intern and the agency or organization hosting the intern. The goal of the Gerontology Program Internship is an experience that benefits the host organization and the student intern. The internship is the time when the student begins to apply the theory and cognitive knowledge he/she has learned to the work situation.

The student enters the internship with academic familiarity in the field of gerontology. The internship provides a chance to expand their knowledge in aging and develop professional skills. This internship includes a service-learning component, in that students are required to reflect on their experience in the agencies, both in written and in seminar discussions with other interns.

This Handbook, prepared by the Gerontology Faculty, will assist the student to plan the experience and to make an informed selection of an agency. Using the Handbook and discussing the experience with the advisor and the internship coordinator, should help make the student's internship beneficial and assist in the transition from full-time students to gerontology professional. It also contains basic information pertaining to the responsibilities of the University and cooperating agencies, which are designed to make the internship experience a working relationship among all three parties – the student, the University, and the agency.

THE GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM AT TOWSON UNIVERSITY

The Gerontology Program at Towson University provides students with the background they need to enter the field of aging and aging services. An important component of the educational experience of students is the internship experience. It is through this internship that students can put the knowledge they have acquired in their academic course work to practice. The internship also provides students with an opportunity to explore their own career choices prior to completing their academic work at Towson.

All undergraduate degree students in Gerontology are required to complete one internship experience. The basic requirements of this experience include:

1. A minimum of 120 hours of service within a community agency or business working with or on behalf of older adults;
2. The development of a contract that outlines the learning objectives related to the internship that is acceptable to the agency supervisor;
3. Participation in supervision meetings on campus with their academic supervisor;
4. A final paper that explores their experience, their understanding of the organization in which they have worked during the semester, and the ways in which their understanding of the field have been strengthened through the internship experience.

Because the field of gerontology is an expanding field and new career opportunities are developing in gerontology, the range of settings appropriate for the internship is broad. Depending upon the interests and strengths of the individual student, internships that satisfy the program requirements can include not only more traditional settings such as public and non-profit agencies directly serving older adults, but businesses, residential settings, and for-profit service providers as well.

The Successful Internship

The Gerontology Program views a successful internship experience as one that meets the needs of the student as well as the host organization. An important vehicle to ensuring success is the contract developed by the student in consultation with the agency supervisor prior to the beginning of the semester. This contract should emerge after a dialogue between the student and the agency supervisor about the interests and needs of both individuals. The contract should articulate the student's learning objectives, specific responsibilities and/or tasks to be undertaken during the semester and, if appropriate, a description of a final product to be developed.

We hope that, during the internship, the intern is treated as a staff person and held accountable in the same ways that staff is accountable for professional behavior and task completion. In this way, students benefit from having the chance to expand their own professional skills and the host agency benefits from the contributions of the student to the mission of the agency. Students are expected to respect the rules and norms of the organization in which they are working and to maintain appropriate standards of confidentiality about their work with older adults.

The Internship Process

The Internship process is as follows:

- Step 1: Student meets with Gerontology Advisor to discuss internship interests and identify potential internship placements.

- Step 2: The Gerontology Advisor provides student with names of potential placement contacts and, if necessary, contacts these individuals first to make sure that the organization can accommodate an intern.

- Step 3: Student arranges appointment to meet with internship contact.

- Step 4: Student prepares resume and outline of learning goals to share with internship contact.
- Step 5: Meeting between student and potential field supervisor takes place and options for the internship are discussed.
- Step 6: Internship coordinator provides field supervisor with a letter and information about the requirements of the internship.
- Step 7: Student finalizes the contract that articulates their internship work and learning objectives. After the contract has been signed by both the student and the field supervisor, copies are provided to the field supervisor and the Internship Coordinator.
- Step 8: Mid-way through the semester, field supervisors complete an evaluation of student's performance, sends it to the Internship Coordinator and meets with the student to discuss this evaluation.
- Step 9: If necessary, revisions are made to contract and learning objectives are modified. These revisions are shared with the Internship Coordinator.
- Step 10: Final semester evaluations are completed by the Field Supervisor and student.

*** Throughout the semester, students will be meeting regularly with the Internship Coordinator and should also meet regularly with the Field Supervisor.

The Learning Objective of the Internship

The focus of the Gerontology Internship is to provide students with an opportunity for an experimental application of knowledge gained in course work and the enhanced learning that comes with working in an agency or organization within the gerontological practice arena. The learning objectives include:

- Increasing understanding of organizational principles and dynamics in a helping and/or practice setting.
- Developing skills necessary to work in an organization in a collaborative fashion with professional staff and consumers of service.
- Increasing understanding of the application of policy and practice standards as they relate to organizations within the aging network.
- Reflecting on practical experiences in a structured way, using assigned topics.
- Using group discussion of reflections as a way to deepen learning.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENT INTERN

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The student intern should view his/her internship experience as an opportunity to learn how to apply theory and principles to the realities of work situations and to develop skills essential to these tasks. The student intern will be placed in an agency and is expected to function as a staff member with responsibilities reflecting his/her capabilities. The Gerontology Program's Internship Coordinator will work with the student to obtain the placement and will supervise him/her throughout the placement. The following guidelines were developed to assist the student intern in obtaining a beneficial field experience.

A. Guidelines

1. The time equivalent of a three-credit course will be spent in the internship experience. The student intern should spend at least 120 hours during the semester in the agency. Any adjustment in work schedule from this policy must be discussed and approved by the agency and Internship Supervisor.
2. The student intern is expected to adhere to the policies, procedures, and working hours that apply to professional and administrative staff members of the agency. Students may be required to meet specific requirements of agency, i.e. insurance. If insurance is required the Gerontology Program will take responsibility for acquiring the insurance through a statewide higher education package. There may be a small fee that the student is required to pay.
3. The student intern may assume major responsibility for a program or project in the agency (to be selected in conjunction the intern's

and agency's needs and interest, and approved by the Internship Coordinator.) The following are examples of activities which would be appropriate:

- a. Assessment of the needs of the population served by the agency.
 - b. Development of objectives for a specific program.
 - c. Development, implementation and evaluation of strategies to address an identified need.
 - d. Identification, utilization and organization of community resources, as appropriate.
 - e. Preparation of appropriate educational materials (slides, brochures, tapes, pamphlets, etc.)
 - f. Identification of sources of communication and preparation of tools to promote activities.
 - g. Participation in organizational service delivery and training/instructional experiences.
 - h. Development of marketing strategies for programs and services.
4. The student is expected to establish a good rapport with supervisors, co-workers, volunteers and other members of the department or division within the agency with whom he/she may come in contact, as well as with clients and/or community organizations. The student is expected to respect the confidentiality and dignity of the client population.
5. The student must maintain communication with the Internship Coordinator throughout the field experience. Email communication and regular basis is encouraged.

6. The student should first discuss any difficulties regarding the placement with the Agency Supervisor. If not resolved, the student should then inform the Internship Coordinator.
7. When required by the assigned agency, the student should adjust the scheduling of his/her working hours at the agency.
8. The student is entitled to observe his/her religious holidays. When these holidays conflict with regular agency schedule, the observance of them may require spending additional time in the agency (to be determined by agency and Internship Coordinator).
9. The student is expected to maintain a regular schedule and should notify the agency supervisor and Internship Coordinator in case of absence.

*** The student should arrange to make up the time missed and must document the time made up in the weekly logs sent to the Internship Coordinator.

10. The student is responsible for commuting expenses to and from the agency, parking, meals and the like.

B. Requirements

The internship is an integral part of the Gerontology curriculum and should be planned in terms of the student intern's abilities, needs and interests. The following procedures will assist the student intern in planning and completing the fieldwork training experience.

The student intern must:

1. Have completed at least Gerontology 101 and one other course in the major before being placed in the internship program.
2. Be active in planning his/her internship by:
 - a. Seeking advice and assistance of the Internship Coordinator.
 - b. Reviewing the list of agencies offering placements to become familiar with the various opportunities offered.
 - c. Speaking to current interns about their experiences.
 - d. Review internship papers on file in the Program Office.
 - e. Recording all pertinent information and dates relating to the internship and meeting all deadlines.
3. Meet with the Internship Coordinator to discuss planning information and selection of an appropriate agency.
4. Prepare a resume to present to Agency Supervisor at interview.
5. Contact the selected agency to arrange for an interview (day, time, and place).
6. Become familiar with the selected agency prior to the interview.
7. Prepare for the interview.

8. Be on time for the agency interview and dress professionally.
9. Notify the Internship Coordinator in writing or email regarding satisfaction with agency and intent for placement.
10. Maintain communication with both the Agency Supervisor and the Internship Coordinator throughout the field training.
11. Meet at least weekly with the Agency Supervisor to discuss project progress, directions, difficulties encountered, future plans, etc.
12. Maintain and submit to Internship Coordinator a weekly log of activities which describe the relationship of the original goals and objectives to intern's activities. These logs should include personal reactions to the intern's experiences during the internship. Subjective evaluations are important for better understanding by supervisors.
13. Attend required intern seminars at the University. Prior to the beginning of the semester, a letter will be sent including the seminar dates. Depending on the size of an intern class, these meetings may be individual meetings between faculty and student and/or email updates.
14. Write all required reports.
15. Bring informational materials about the agency to the University to keep the agency file up-to-date.
16. Before or during the final seminar in the student's community placement, complete all evaluation forms.

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR STUDENT INTERNS

DO treat your internship as you would a paid, professional position by acting in a professional manner, conforming to the organization's dress code, being on time, completing your assignments in a timely and high quality fashion and by alerting your Field Supervisor to any required schedule changes.

DO speak openly and honestly with your Field Supervisor about things that bother you or problems that you have during the internship.

DO check in regularly with the Internship Coordinator and keep the Coordinator informed about any problems or issues that arise during the internship.

DON'T cancel regularly scheduled intern days because of a "crisis" related to completing requirements for another class.

DON'T talk about the elders with whom you work with in a way that identifies them or divulges confidential information.

DON'T agree to take on any assignments that you do not feel qualified for or that bother you personally.

REMEMBER: You are an ambassador for the Gerontology Program at Towson University when you work in the field. The things you do reflect not only on yourself, but on all other students in the program.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM

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The following are the responsibilities of the Gerontology Program during the three phases of field work experience: planning, implementation and evaluation.

A. Planning for field work experience

1. The Internship Coordinator will establish criteria and approve agencies for the internship program based on the following:
 - a. Agency must be able to provide appropriate gerontology experiences to the assigned bachelor's level students.
 - b. Placement of an intern in an agency must be under the direct supervision of a staff member who has a minimum of two years of full-time experience in an appropriate agency, and who has worked in the current agency for at least one year.
 - c. The Agency Supervisor must be willing to accept responsibility for a three-way partnership for the internship including attendance at conferences, completion of relevant forms, personal and telephone conversations as needed with Internship Coordinator and scheduled meetings as needed.
 - d. The agency and student must develop and sign a contract outlining their respective roles and responsibilities for the internship.
2. The Program will provide the Agency Supervisor an opportunity to participate in the selection of the student who may be placed in

the agency. Whenever possible, this will be accomplished in an interview at least two months prior to the internship.

3. The Internship Coordinator will assist each student in selecting an agency where his/her career goals and objectives will most likely be met.
4. The Internship Coordinator will assign the student to an agency for the experience based upon the student's choices and experience, including GPA, and with the concurrence of the agency and the Agency Supervisor.
5. The Internship Coordinator will send a written confirmation to the cooperating agency.

B. Implementation

1. The Program will provide ongoing assistance to both the student and the Field Supervisor. The Internship Coordinator has the major responsibility for this assistance, but should special problems arise, these shall be resolved with the approval of the Program Director.
2. The Internship Coordinator, the Field Supervisor and the student will meet as frequently as necessary to provide ongoing coordinated supervision.
3. The Program will be responsible for providing consultation and technical assistance requested by students in order to complete the agreed upon responsibilities with the agency.

4. The Program will ensure that there is an opportunity for interns to further develop their skills and share experiences.
5. During the internship, a Field Supervisor or a student may request a reassignment through the University's Internship Coordinator during the first month. This action should be taken only as a last resort.

C. Evaluation

1. The Internship Coordinator will discuss the evaluation instruments with the students at the first field work seminar. These will include the following:
 - a. Agency supervisor's evaluation of student performance.
 - b. Student's evaluation of the agency.
 - c. Student's evaluation of the field supervisor.

The Internship Coordinator will provide the mid-semester and final evaluation instruments to the student and to the Field Supervisor in a timely fashion.

2. The Internship Coordinator will submit a grade for the internship. She/he will take into consideration the Field Supervisor's evaluation of the student, the student's final report, the observations and site visits, and discussions with the student and agency personnel. The grade will not be submitted until all required documents have been received and accepted.
 - a. Field supervisor's evaluation of student's performance.
 - b. Student's evaluation of field supervisor and agency.
 - c. Student's final report on internship experience.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COOPERATING AGENCY/ORGANIZATION

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During the internship, the cooperating agency has several responsibilities to the student and to the University. They include but are not limited to the following:

1. Supervision of Student – This includes guidance and professional supervision. It should also include helping the student obtain additional opportunities for learning. Supervisors should be assigned who have the appropriate education and experience to carry out this function.
2. Agency Orientation – The agency should orient the student to the agency and orient the agency staff to the internship program in general and the student in particular.
3. Group work and other work experiences – The agency should provide for experience of working in groups and if possible include situations in which the student is in charge and ones in which the student is part of a working group.
4. Faculty Communication – Communication with faculty must be maintained to improve the experience.
5. Work Environment – The agency will provide physical facilities necessary to accommodate students. These might include desk space and other essential services such as access to phone.
6. Reimbursement Policy – Where necessary, the agency should provide for reimbursement of expenses such as job-related travel or other expenses if possible. If no reimbursement exists, the agency should make this known to the student.

7. Insurance Coverage – The agency shall have some form of liability coverage for those students who are open to any type of risk because of their duties. The agency should let the Internship Coordinator know if insurance is in effect or not. If there is no liability insurance, the student will be covered through the University.

Requirements for Agency

1. Interview prospective interns.
2. Meet with prospective students in order to confer.
3. Return to University written email acceptance of student.
4. Assist student in establishing objectives for his/her particular experience.
5. Provide necessary progress reports to the University and/or student on his/her performance on an ongoing basis.
6. At specified points in the experience, submit to the University, after reviewing with the student, the completed Evaluation/Assessment form.
7. Provide times for Internship Coordinator conferences.
8. Maintain compliance with all criteria set out in contract negotiated at the beginning of the placement.

HOST AGENCY DO'S AND DON'TS

DO take the time to provide a comprehensive orientation of the intern to your agency/organization, its mission and its relationship to other organizations in the community.

DO treat the intern as a professional staff member with the same expectations you have of paid staff.

DO communicate with the intern directly about all evaluative forms and/or problems that arise during their internship.

DO call the Internship Coordinator if you have any problems or questions.

DON'T assign the intern a task or responsibility for which they are not prepared or capable of managing.

DON'T underestimate an intern's capabilities or assume that they require constant supervision.

DON'T be afraid to correct an intern's behavior if it does not conform to your organization's rules or norms.

**COPIES OF FORMS TO BE USED
DURING THE INTERNSHIP**

STUDENT INFORMATION
Gerontology Internship

Name:

Student ID Number:

Address:

Phone Number(s):

Email:

Best time/place to reach you:

Semester and year of placement:

Gerontology-related classes already taken:

Classes currently taking (and times):

Preferences for placement (both agencies and type of activity):

1.

2.

3.

4.

Career goals (if known at present):

GERONTOLOGY INTERNSHIP CONTRACT

The student and the agency, together, need to develop a contract spelling out:

1. The hours to be worked.
2. Tasks to be performed.
3. Supervision to be provided
4. Agency expectations for attendance, attire, and any other internship-specific requirements.
5. Recognition that Towson University will be granting college credit for this experience, and expects the student to be adequately supervised and given a sufficient variety of tasks.
6. Recognition that the Towson University Faculty Supervisor will be in touch with the student and the agency, throughout the semester, including visiting on-site at least two times.

It is the student's responsibility to develop and finalize the Internship Contract.

Name: _____

Supervisor: _____

Placement Site: _____

Date: _____

**GERONTOLOGY INTERNSHIP
Progress Report**

Instructions:

Please evaluate the student's progress by checking the appropriate space. This is an attempt to inform the student and the University representative about the performance of the student in your organization. Feel free to make any additional comments at the end.

	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Needs to Improve	Not applicable
Personal Characteristics					
1. Appearance					
2. Overall Emotional & Physical Fitness					
3. Self-confidence					
4. Tact in dealing with others					
5. Enthusiasm					
6. Punctuality					
7. Responsibility					
8. Initiative					
9. Interest in Organization and Project(s)					
10. Attitude toward working situation					
11. Accepts assignments					
12. Listens well					

	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Needs to Improve	Not Applicable
Professional Manner					
1. Ability to lead					
2. Sincerity					
3. Attitude toward suggestions and constructive criticism					
4. Creative, innovative					
5. Works well with staff, clients, volunteers, etc.					
6. Flexible, adaptable					
7. Utilizes supervisor as a resource person					
Application of Knowledge					
1. Organizes materials					
2. Considers all aspects of the program					
3. Records information about the program					
4. Uses a variety of communication techniques					
5. Delegates appropriately					
6. Uses appropriate evaluation tools					
7. Able to plan and conduct meetings					
8. Able to analyze group process					
9. Completes assignments on time					
Professional Preparation					
1. Verbal skills					
2. Written skills					
3. Knowledge of gerontology					
4. Able to visualize his/her role in the agency and project(s)					

Towson University
GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM
FIELD SUPERVISOR EVALUATION FORM

	<u>Excellent</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>Average</u> <u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1. Field Supervisor provided oral and written information on the total agency at the time of the interview.						
2. Assignments /projects pursued by the intern were discussed and mutually agreed upon by intern and supervisor.						
3. Field Supervisor gave assignments, instructions, tasks and constructive advice to the intern for fulfilling his/her responsibilities.						
4. Field Supervisor assisted and encouraged intern in his/her projects and programs.						
5. Field Supervisor provided timely feedback to intern.						
6. Field Supervisor was willing to enhance the intern's existing skills and/or willing to develop new skills.						
7. Field Supervisor was willing to listen to intern.						
8. Field Supervisor encouraged intern to work independently.						
9. Field Supervisor provided professional role model for intern.						
10. Field Supervisor was able to aid intern in making transition from student to a professional role.						
11. Field Supervisor was available for guidance and supervision.						
12. Overall effectiveness of the Field Supervisor.						

Additional Comments:

**TOWSON UNIVERSITY
GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM
AGENCY EVALUATION FORM**

This evaluation form will be placed in your file for the purpose of evaluating the agency in regards to future field assignments for other undergraduate interns.

Date: _____

Your Name: _____

Your Supervisor: _____

Agency: _____ Date you started: _____

Ended: _____ Semester (circle one) Fall Spring Summer

Average time per week that you worked: _____

1. How would you rate your experience with this agency as a learning experience? Circle one.

Excellent Good Average Fair Poor

Why?

2. List what you feel are the agency's strengths and weaknesses.

3. List what you feel are the agency supervisors strengths and weaknesses.

4. Additional comments: (Use back of sheet if necessary)

OUTLINE FOR FINAL EVALUATION PAPER

1. Student's view of the mission of the organization.
2. Orientation given by the agency to the responsibilities of an intern.
3. Overall summary of activities.
4. Experiences in planning activities and/or programs.
5. Experiences in carrying out activities and/or programs.
6. Experiences in evaluating the results of programs.
7. Reflection on personal ability to meet demands of the job (deadlines, pressure, uncertainty, etc.)
8. Report of ability to get along with agency supervisor, University supervisor, and fellow workers.
9. Report of ability to perceive that contributions were worthwhile and appreciated.
10. Review of "positives" associated with the internship.
11. Overview of areas for improvement in the work experience.
12. Summary of the entire internship in terms of what such an experience mean as far as your future as a professional in gerontology, including a review of any surprise in the internship.