

HPM@PC

Field Experience Handbook

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Overview

A supervised field experience, or internship, is one of the capstone requirements for earning a degree in Health Policy and Management (HPM) at Providence College. During their senior year, HPM majors learn to apply the conceptual models and theories learned in class to real world settings. The course is reserved for seniors, for we seek to place students who can immediately contribute to their placement organizations.

The Field Experience Seminar

Each week, students in HPM 450 gather together to reflect on their placement experiences and consider significant trends, issues, and themes in the field they may encounter in their placements. Attendance at all seminar meetings is mandatory. Seminar participation will be a major component of the course grade, along with monthly journal submissions, several short reflective papers, weekly timesheet submissions, and formal evaluations by their field supervisor. The need to place field work in context is the principal reason why HPM students must complete their internships during the academic year, rather than completing hours over summer or intersession breaks. Seminar meetings foster the integration of practical experience and theoretical understanding and allow students to share common experiences and challenges.

Students may only enroll in HPM 450 once. Any student who fails to complete his/her field experience due to violations of academic integrity or who fails to follow the expectations for student behavior outlined in this Handbook will not be allowed to retake HPM 450. As interns, students represent not only themselves, but the HPM program and faculty, as well as Providence College. Unprofessional behavior during an internship will result in a failing grade in HPM 450 and removal from the major.

Goals

Our capstone field seminar provides hands on, practical experiences that enable students to “test drive” a potential career. The field experience enables students to apply their critical reading and writing skills, disciplinary knowledge of health care institutions, health care management, health policy, and health law to concrete problems under the supervision of practicing professionals in the field. Field placement sites are encouraged to provide students with opportunities for shadowing to develop a clearer sense of their career goals and interests. Field education addresses several areas of learning, including:

- disciplinary knowledge (e.g., HIPAA, EMR, reimbursement, epidemiology, etc.), communication skills (oral and written, in real world settings such as presentations, sales, legislative research, patient record-keeping)
- health information technologies and productivity tools (e.g., Excel, Access, PowerPoint)
- critical thinking skills (problem-solving in real world setting)
- organizational skills and networking
- professional development (interviewing skills, resume development, presentation of self)

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Health Policy and Management Program affirms the right of every student, faculty member, and field supervisor to be free from discrimination and to be treated equally and as an individual without regard to race, color, creed, class, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, religion, ethnic or national origin, immigration status, age, physical disabilities, status as a veteran, or political affiliation.

Learning Objectives

The Health Policy and Management Program at Providence College expects that its capstone field seminar will provide engaged learning opportunities for students to:

- develop an understanding of how concepts introduced in our required and elective courses apply to the daily life of organizations in government and the health care industry;
- gain a clearer sense of their own personal and professional goals;
- learn to apply theoretical frameworks supported by empirical evidence to concrete problems and projects in their host organization;
- develop a deeper understanding of the American health care system;
- demonstrate an ability to organize and utilize data, and to think analytically;
- develop skills in working with a range of patients, providers, payers, and policymakers;
- act in accordance with ethical principles as a practicing health care professional (e.g., patient confidentiality, informed consent, privacy);
- improve oral and written professional communication skills;
- assume responsibility for their own professional learning and development;
- learn to utilize experience, peers, and colleagues to advance professional learning;
- learn about their own attitudes, values, motivations, and capacities as they relate to their future career in health care;
- demonstrate responsible professional work habits.

During the course of their field placement, interns are expected to:

- familiarize themselves with the mission, philosophy, cultures, norms, values, and organizational structure of their placement site;
- gain an understanding of their placement organization's larger economic/political environment;
- understand the organization's role within the health care industry and the larger community;
- function with increasing independence within their placement site over the course of their internship;
- collaborate with colleagues inside and outside their placement site to meet goals established by the site supervisor;
- develop project management skills;
- communicate professionally and effectively both verbally and in writing;
- develop competency with record keeping and documentation (e.g., EMR, billing);
- manage multiple demands and organize their work effectively;
- address ethical issues and dilemmas;

- recognize when a situation is beyond their role or capacity, and learn to draw upon the resources and skills of others in the organization to solve problems;
- build a personal network of mentors and resources to advance their career in health care.

Selection of Placement Sites

To provide the best possible professional learning opportunities for students, the HPM program at Providence College has developed affiliations with a wide range of placement sites, representing a variety of career paths within the health care field. The Program maintains ongoing relationships with a variety of settings in an effort to be able to meet the interests and needs of individual students. Established placement sites include inpatient hospital settings, outpatient clinical settings, government agencies and regulatory bodies, law firms, health insurers, public health advocacy groups, and policy research and advocacy organizations.

Affiliated placement sites must demonstrate a commitment to providing meaningful educational experiences for HPM students. The student's field supervisor must provide opportunities for interns to gain knowledge and apply their skills to concrete problems. The workload of the placement site's field supervisor must permit time for student supervision. It is expected that organizations will offer students an orientation to their services, policies, and procedures. Organizations should provide a range of learning experiences with attention to the educational value for the particular intern; in turn, students are expected to contribute to the needs of their host organization in a meaningful way.

Field supervisors must be willing to work with the HPM faculty in designing, developing, and monitoring students' practicum experiences and in evaluating students' professional growth and performance. Field supervisors must want to serve as mentors. The ability to supervise effectively and to stimulate students to think critically are essential qualities for field supervisors. Please note: all hours must be completed on site and under the direct supervision of a member of the placement organization; remote work/telecommuting is not permitted for field placements without the prior permission of the site supervisor, the HPM faculty member, and the HPM field experience coordinator.

In cases where a student seeks to develop a placement in a setting not already approved by the Program, the student will be responsible for providing information to the HPM field experience coordinator about how the setting meets the minimum criteria for approval. Many sites require a formal learning agreement that must be approved by College legal counsel, so new placement opportunities often take time to develop.

Planning for the Field Placement

In the semester before they enroll in Field Experience, students must complete an online Field Experience interest survey distributed via email; this survey includes the student's goals and potential career interests that will be distributed to faculty teaching HPM 450. After reviewing the survey results, the Field Experience coordinator and other HPM faculty teaching HPM 450 will schedule preliminary advising meetings with students to discuss potential field placements. Students will have an opportunity to review descriptions of previous placements and feedback from previous students to help inform their choice of possible placement sites.

Students will be provided with contact information for several potential sites. With this in hand, students will contact potential field placement supervisors by email or phone, then schedule

either an in-person or telephone interview with prospective supervisors so that the organization and students can assess the “fit” for the placement.

The College bears final responsibility for affiliation decisions, so all students must complete and sign an internship learning agreement prior to the start of the third week of the semester in order to receive credit for the course.

Timeframe

Ideally, field experience placements will be arranged and confirmed by the end of the semester prior to the students’ actual enrollment in HPM 450. In some cases, students may still be interviewing when the semester begins, but field placements must be finalized no later than the third week of the semester.

Personal transportation

Students are advised to have personal transportation available to them, as the program does not provide transportation to/from field placement sites. If students plan to use public transit to travel to placement throughout the state of Rhode Island and neighboring Massachusetts (including several opportunities at teaching hospitals in Boston), they will need to make arrangements to arrive on time for scheduled hours.

Costs

Students are responsible for the costs of transportation to and from their placement sites. In some instances parking at practicum sites is available, in other instances students will need to bear the costs of metered/private lot parking or commuter rail.

Compensation

Most HPM placement sites are unpaid, but at the discretion of the student’s field supervisor, interns may be paid either a fixed stipend or an hourly rate by their host organization. In cases where interns are paid for their work, negotiation of salary will be the responsibility of the student and the field supervisor. Note: Students receiving federal work study funds may be eligible for community work study compensation for placements in eligible non-profit or governmental organizations.

The Role of the HPM Field Experience Coordinator

The field experience curriculum is administered by a Field Experience Coordinator who is a full-time member of the Providence College HPM faculty. The Coordinator is responsible for providing the educational and administrative services necessary to assure the quality and integrity of the educational process in the field experience phase of the curriculum.

The Field Experience Coordinator will:

- monitor student learning in all field placements;
- approve placement sites and field supervisors for affiliation with the HPM program in coordination with the College’s Office of General Counsel and the program director;
- facilitate the selection of potential field placements by students each semester;

- conduct orientation sessions for the interns in preparation for the field experience;
- match interns' learning needs with the appropriate organizations and supervisors;
- conduct end-of-semester evaluations for all interns, and report data related to program assessment and outcomes to the Program Director.
- consult with field supervisors and interns throughout the learning process;
- contact placement sites at least once each semester and make follow-up visits as indicated;
- coordinate the HPM internship fair;
- consult with field supervisors regarding problems that may arise related to the educational progress of their interns.

The Role of the Field Supervisor

Field supervisors play a vital role in the educational and professional development of students in the HPM program. Field supervisors serve in a teaching capacity in relation to the interns in the field. They are responsible for planning, monitoring, and supervising interns' learning experiences in the field and are responsible for evaluating the students' professional growth and performance in the field.

Field supervisors plan and implement the interns' learning experiences collaboratively with HPM faculty and the student. Field supervisors can determine with interns and HPM faculty experiences and assignments that best address these goals. Field supervisors also serve as role models for the interns. As such, they exert tremendous influence on interns' perceptions of their organizations, and of the professional challenges and opportunities available in the field.

Field supervisors will:

- collaborate with the student to develop a formal plan for the student's placement. A detailed internship learning agreement must be approved by the third week of the semester;
- identify essential skills and other learning opportunities within the setting;
- conduct regularly scheduled supervision/mentoring conferences with the student;
- produce a written evaluation of the student's growth and performance at the midpoint and again at the end of each semester.

Upon arrival at their field placement site, it is expected that students will be involved in the work of the organization. Where possible, projects should be available for immediate assignment to interns. The placement site should include students in staff meetings and in-service training and should provide appropriate space and resources to carry out assigned responsibilities.

Supervision

Field supervisors must schedule regular times to meet with and mentor their intern. Such conferences represent an important part of the students' learning experience. Staff meetings can provide an opportunity for important learning; however, departmental or organizational staff meetings should not be substituted for regularly scheduled individual interaction between the student and his/her supervisor.

Field supervisors are responsible, at the end of each semester, for submitting a written evaluation of their intern's progress on a form provided by the College; supervisors are strongly encouraged to discuss this evaluation with their intern's.

Field supervisors should contact the HPM Field Experience Coordinator as soon as possible with concerns about student lateness, missed hours, prolonged illness of either the field supervisor or student, or changes in the organizational structure and supervision for the intern in order that appropriate educational plans may be considered.

Student Responsibilities

From the onset HPM interns are to conduct themselves in a professionally responsible manner. Students are expected to:

- demonstrate a positive regard for others in relationships with colleagues, clients, peers, and supervisors;
- protect the confidentiality of patient records and organizations' proprietary information and data;
- take initiative in learning;
- conduct themselves with honesty and integrity in their placement setting and in the classroom
- exercise responsible work habits by completing assigned tasks in a timely fashion, arriving on time for scheduled hours at their placement site, and notifying supervisors and faculty of unexpected absences.

The following expectations set the standards for students' participation in HPM 450:

- Interns are expected to establish a regular work schedule with their supervisors. Interns are expected to be punctual and to use the time within their organizations to work on organizational assignments. Any changes in work schedules must be made with the approval of their supervisor. In the case of illness or family emergencies, the student should contact the supervisor directly and also notify their HPM faculty member.
- As interns, students represent both Providence College and the professional organizations of which they are a part. Their manner and behavior should be courteous, composed, and professional at all times. If they are confronted with a situation in which they find it difficult to maintain their professional demeanor, they should seek out the assistance of their supervisor or another experienced staff member. Personal situations should be handled away from the work setting.
- Interns should treat all others associated with their organization with positive regard, both in their direct interactions with and in their interactions about patients and colleagues.
- Interns are responsible for defining their assignments and responsibilities within the organization, and must be prepared to ask any questions necessary to clarify responsibilities. Interns are expected to extend themselves to meet the responsibilities assigned to them.
- Reading that is relevant to the organization and the intern's responsibilities within the organization is a valid use of time. In addition to pre-scheduled and predictable assignments or responsibilities, it is helpful to have a manageable independent project that can be worked on as time permits.

- The quality of an intern's experience is shaped by the student's willingness to take initiative and be a "self-starter." Interns are expected to take active responsibility for their own learning. In many instances, interns will be asked to do things they have not done before. At the same time they will not be asked to do things that they are unqualified to address. They should ask questions and follow through on assignments.
- Interns are responsible for establishing a regular meeting time with their supervisor. This time should be used to review assignments, to discuss issues relevant to their experience and the organization, to monitor the student's professional development, and to reflect upon and learn from their work to date.
- Interns are expected to take the first step to bring to the attention of their supervisors any concerns or problems that interfere with their learning experience. If a concern persists, the intern should talk with their HPM faculty so that the situation can be resolved positively and in a timely fashion.
- Interns are expected to take the initiative to keep their HPM faculty informed about their experiences and progress. The HPM Field Experience Coordinator should be informed immediately of any situation that interferes with attendance or performance at the placement site.
- Interns observe College designated holidays. In the instance of a one day holiday that falls on a day a student is scheduled to be at the field placement site, arrangements should be made to change this time to another day of the week. Interns will be responsible for making supervisors aware of College designated holidays and for arranging coverage of their responsibilities during those times.
- Interns are expected to observe a professional dress code.
- Interns must arrive on time at their placement sites on scheduled days.
- Interns must submit a weekly time

The Weekly Field Experience Seminar (HPM 450)

Attendance is required at weekly seminar meetings, so interns should not schedule assigned tasks/duties, or other obligations (e.g., job interviews) during the time they are registered for seminar. The field seminar is a group experience designed to enhance and support professional development. The seminar provides students with an opportunity to examine their professional goals, improve their presentation and written skills, and learn about challenges they will face as health professionals in a supportive environment. Students will also learn from one another's experiences in the field.

Journal

Students are expected to write a brief journal entry at the end of each day in their field experience site. Journaling gives one an opportunity to reflect on and process the experiences of the practicum. Journals will be submitted to their faculty member as part of the student's weekly timesheet submission. All timesheet entries will be posted to the College's secure, password-protected learning management system (Sakai).

HPM Internship Fair

Students will create a formal poster using Microsoft PowerPoint (20x30 inches) that describes the mission of their organization and their work as an intern. Students are required to attend the HPM internship fair to display and discuss their posters with students and faculty. This assignment provides students with an opportunity to apply practical computing skills and to capture the nature of their placement experience for future HPM students. Copies of student presentations will be available online for students to browse; selected presentations will be printed and displayed at future internship planning workshops.

Analysis Papers

Students will submit several critical analyses that apply course themes to their field experience placement setting throughout the semester. Specific prompts and guidelines will be included in the course syllabi distributed by HPM faculty at the beginning of each semester. All analysis papers will be posted to the College's secure, password-protected learning management system (Sakai).

Organizational Analysis

Students will prepare a 3000-3500 word organizational analysis that identifies the most pressing management or policy challenges facing their organization, assesses the organization's mission and purpose, and discusses how this will either help or hinder the organization to respond to the challenges identified above. Students will also examine how the organization's culture and leadership should respond to these challenges.

Professional Development

Students will participate in mock interviews, resume and cover letter workshops, and attend panels with area health professionals. In addition, students will prepare a comprehensive self-reflection as part of their course writing requirements in HPM 450.

Seminar Participation

Students will be expected to share their experiences at their placement sites with their classmates each week; faculty may ask students to present, summarize, or respond to assigned readings, either individually or in groups. Active participation is both expected and required.

Sexual Harassment Policy

The College and the Health Policy and Management Program are committed to a policy that affords all members of the College community, including faculty members, field supervisors, students, and staff, the right to be free from discrimination in the form of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating or offensive working or educational atmosphere. In the educational context, such actions are prohibited when they have impact on the educational process between students and academic and field faculty.

Any student who has a complaint or concern about sexual harassment should immediately bring the matter to the attention of their site supervisor, the HPM field experience coordinator, and their HPM faculty seminar leader. In cases where the student's concerns involve their direct site supervisor, the Human Resources office at the placement site should also be notified. The College will take appropriate corrective and preventive action should its investigation disclose the occurrence of sexual harassment.

Personal Safety

The Program expects that supervisors will inform students of any relevant safety policies and protocols. At the beginning of the field experience, students should be made aware of practices that maximize personal safety during their internship. In the event of a student being injured, harmed, or threatened, the supervisor should contact the HPM faculty member immediately to insure that the necessary steps are taken after the incident.

Dress Code

Dress is a key element of professional demeanor. Appearance matters! Interns are expected to dress as young professionals and with awareness that they are representing both Providence College and their field placement organization. Since confusion often exists in the workplace, both among full time employees and student interns, about what constitutes professional attire in an age of "business casual" dress, please use the following as a practical guide to "Dress for Success" in internship placements:

NO jeans, cargo pants, halter tops, t-shirts, exercise clothing, sweat shirts, hiking boots, sneakers, or casual sandals are appropriate, regardless of how casually other staff dress. Shirts must meet the top of pants and cover the midriff throughout the full range of possible physical motions and postures. Belly rings and tongue rings should not be openly displayed.

Appropriate dress for women includes dress slacks or skirts, and a blouse, sweater set, or a t-top and sweater; for men, appropriate dress includes slacks, shirt, tie, and a sweater or sports jacket. Dress flats or heels are appropriate. Skirt lengths and necklines should be discreet.

Internship Learning Agreement and Expectations

Students are expected to submit draft written learning agreements to HPM faculty by the second week of the semester. Final versions of this agreement should be submitted via the eFriars portal using instructions provided by the HPM faculty member. Completed forms must be completed by the end of the third week of the semester to earn course credit for HPM 450.

The field experience is framed by an educational contract (Learning Agreement) that gives definition and structure to the semester. The learning agreement specifies the relationship between the field supervisor and student and provides the means for planning and for evaluating active learning. The format for the Learning Agreement calls for a concise statement of:

- learning objectives and goals;
- the associated experiences and activities that will produce the desired learning;
- the nature of tasks/work for the student;
- a plan for supervision and mentoring.

The development of this contract is a shared responsibility of the field supervisor and student, with the student assuming the responsibility for the final statement. Once the intern and the supervisor have had a preliminary discussion about learning opportunities in the setting, the student should take the initiative to develop the first draft for the supervisor's feedback. Early seminar discussions will help to prepare students for this process.

The Learning Agreement:

- provides a mutually agreed upon framework and structure for the field experience;
- defines the substance and content of the learning that is to take place;
- provides a frame of reference against which progress can be measured and monitored;
- serves as a reminder to the intern, supervisor, and HPM faculty of the purposes and activities of the internship placement.
- provides the basis for evaluation of the student's learning experience and performance.

To be meaningful, the Learning Agreement requires agreement on learning objectives and activities early in the semester, thus providing usefulness for planning the learning experiences of the internship. It is not expected that the contract will or should define and account for all learning. As a contract, however, the Learning Agreement should represent the priorities and activities that will guide the student's learning during a particular semester.

Learning Objectives (What do you hope to learn?)

Learning objectives should be specific and manageable. Unexpected changes in your responsibilities (activities) are sometimes made after the contract has been formulated. Some flexibility is needed to allow for changes in learning objectives and activities. When changes are made, students should report these to their faculty as soon as possible.

Learning activities (How will you learn?)

The identified activities should be directly related to the learning objectives. There should be a clear and rational link between the activities and the focus and type of learning.

Supervision

What is the plan for supervision/mentoring? Who will supervise the intern? How frequently will supervisory sessions be scheduled?

Signatures

The digital signing of the learning agreement through Handshake is a contract by the intern, the HPM faculty member, and the supervisor that indicates agreement among all parties to the plan that it establishes.

Clock Hours Requirement

All students enrolled in HPM 450 are required to be in their field settings approximately 8-10 hours per week (120 hours). Supervisors must certify that students have completed their required number of hours prior to the end of the semester; students may, if necessary, fulfill their required hours during the final exam period at the end of the semester or during scheduled semester breaks/holidays by mutual agreement with their field supervisor and HPM faculty. Any misrepresentation of hours logged at the field placement site is considered to be a breach of academic integrity that will be reported to the Dean of the College. Any students who falsify timesheets will receive an automatic grade of F in HPM 450 and will not be eligible to retake the class in future semesters.

Vacations

Interns observe College holidays, providing interns have made appropriate arrangements for coverage of their professional responsibilities. Interns are responsible for notifying field supervisors of upcoming vacations in advance. In the instance that a student's scheduled placement falls on a one day holiday such as Veteran's Day, the intern must make up the hours at another time during the semester.

Absences

Field supervisors should be informed of all absences in advance. Colds or staying up late are not considered to be legitimate reasons for absence. If an intern is absent for two consecutive days or if a pattern of schedule changes, irregular attendance, or tardiness seems to be developing, the faculty member and the supervisor should be notified immediately.

Missed Time

Interns are expected to take initiative to make arrangements to make up all missed time. In cases where an intern has to make up more than 8 clock hours, the plan for making up the missed hours must be approved by the faculty member. Although the College has designated completion dates, interns are expected to remain in the field until all professional responsibilities have been met satisfactorily.

Termination of the Field Experience

Once the field experience is completed and the affiliation with the organization ended, students should not represent the organization in any manner without the explicit knowledge and sanction of the organization.

Evaluation of Interns

Performance evaluation is an ongoing process that starts with the intern's first day of field placement and culminates in a final written assessment at the conclusion of each semester. Meetings with the supervisor should afford the intern help in appraising performance, progress, and learning needs. If there has been continuous sharing throughout placement, written evaluations should hold no surprises. Field supervisors will be provided standard evaluation forms to assess intern performance via email before mid-semester and again at the end of the semester.