

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA



Department of Teaching & Learning
Special Education

Distant Internship Guidelines

SPED Internships: ED, LD, DCD

PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY

The internship experience is operated on a competency-based model. Students are expected to gain and display effective teaching skills and humanistic interpersonal skills. The purpose of the internship experience is to provide students with the opportunity:

- A. To effectively apply the knowledge acquired in all previous coursework to the classroom/school setting.
- B. To learn methods of instruction that work best in a particular school setting.
- C. To effectively display the professional qualities and dedication required of a special education teacher.
- D. To learn and display flexibility when outside forces determine a change in schedule or instruction.
- E. To experiment with different instructional and management techniques that work best for the intern and students.
- F. To display enthusiasm and a positive attitude toward the teaching experience in regards to students, parents, colleagues, paraprofessionals, and administrators.

Roles and Responsibilities

The University Supervisor is expected to:

- A. Make the internship requirements available on Blackboard at the beginning of the semester for all interns to view. The University Supervisor will explain all expectations and assignments for the internship experience using Blackboard. This will be available 1-2 weeks prior to the start of the semester.
- B. Manage the SPED Internship Blackboard site.
- C. Call the mentor teacher at the onset of the semester to make introductions and to answer questions.
- D. Hold meeting(s) with each intern and his/her mentor teacher throughout the semester to discuss progress. Having the mentor teacher record progress in writing to share with the University supervisor is encouraged.
- E. Oversee improvement plans, as well as collaborate with the intern's academic advisor when problems/concerns arise during the internship experience.

- F. Oversee and grade all assignments required for the internship.
- G. Complete a final evaluation on each intern, including awarding a letter grade for the internship. Note that the letter grade assigned for the internship credits is based on the quality of the written assignments and the mentor's and UND Supervisor's evaluation of the intern's performance.

The **Mentor Teacher** is expected to:

- A. Supervise all aspects of the intern's experience, including both personal and professional growth. There should be ongoing communication between the mentor and the intern, at minimum, at least one 30 minute formal meeting time per week. Provide constructive and direct feedback with the intern on a regular basis, both verbally and in writing.
- B. Provide the intern with a caseload of students that will provide the best real-life experience. This should occur approximately during week three, since the intern should observe and assist you for the first 2 weeks. Ideally, you should turn over students whom you know fairly well, so that you can consult effectively about them.
- C. Provide support and mentorship to the intern. Depending on the intern's background and previous experience, he/she may need to observe you conduct an evaluation and an IEP, and then may need assistance with his/her first evaluation and first IEP meeting. It is intended that the intern do the total job a special education teacher would do. The mentor teacher will need to attend all meetings and be listed as case manager.
- D. Consult about the students you assigned to the intern on a regular basis to suggest effective instructional techniques, behavior management strategies, and collaboration techniques for working with students, teachers, and parents.
- E. Orientate the intern to pertinent school policies, procedures, and routines (e.g., work day starting and ending times, classroom schedule, discipline procedures, duplicating, supplies, dress code).
- F. Meet with the intern and UND supervisor at least 3 times throughout the semester using videoconferencing or teleconferencing.
- G. Express any concerns about the performance of the intern or other aspects of the internship experience to the intern and the University supervisor immediately so that concerns can be dealt with in a timely fashion.
- H. Assist the intern with the written assignments required by UND for successful completion of the internship experience. A list of the assignments and their descriptions will be provided. Although the UND supervisor grades the written assignments, you are expected to assist the intern with the assignments and then provide feedback to both the intern and the UND supervisor.

- I. Complete the *Internship Evaluation Form*, provided by UND, at the midway point and at the end of the semester. Your input will assist the UND supervisor in assigning a letter grade for the internship credits in which the intern is enrolled.
- J. Model best practices, as well as remain open to implementing new practices as introduced by the intern.

The Intern is expected to:

- A. Fulfill all of the required hours for the number of internship credits in which you are enrolled. Internship hours are based on 60 hours per credit of direct student contact time. Direct student contact time is time spent instructing or assessing students. It does not include completion of paperwork, preparation time, collaboration with teachers, parents, and paraprofessionals, or the conducting of IEP/assessment meetings and parent conferences.
- B. Call your mentor teacher prior to starting the internship experience. This is a professional courtesy and will provide information concerning where and when to begin the first day.
- C. Follow the schedule of the school site rather than UND's schedule. This may mean beginning the internship earlier than the start of the UND semester. In addition, school holidays/days off will be followed, rather than UND holidays/days off.
- D. Observe the mentor teacher as closely as possible for teaching techniques (e.g., teaching methods, methods of disciplining) that may be used during teaching opportunities. Interns are expected to observe their mentor teacher extensively at the beginning of the internship experience, typically for 1 to 2 weeks. By week 3, you should have full responsibility of a caseload of students.
- E. Perform all of the duties of a full-time special education teacher (e.g., planning for and instructing students according to their IEPs, assessing students both formally and informally, conducting at least one IEP/assessment meeting, collaborating with classroom teachers and parents, completing all due process paperwork) by the end of the internship experience.
- F. Meet with the mentor teacher and University supervisor using videoconferencing or teleconferencing. Share what is going well and what questions or challenges you may have. It is important to remain open and responsive to feedback. Be up-front and direct regarding any concerns you have immediately!
 - You are responsible for ensuring all required technologies are available and working before each meeting (i.e., microphone, webcam, firewall issues).

- G. Request assistance proactively related to teaching, assignment clarification, working with school personnel, professional issues, and any personal issues that may impact job performance.
- H. Implement and share best practices in the field that you learned in University coursework and on-the-job.
- I. Complete all of the required written assignments for the internship credits in which you are enrolled. A list of assignments with their descriptions will be provided by the University supervisor through the SPED Internship Blackboard site. Note that the grade assigned for the internship experience will be based on the written assignments and the mentor's and UND supervisor's evaluation of your performance.
- J. Clear all absences such as illness with the mentor teacher and report the absences to the UND supervisor. Missed internship hours must be made up, consequently extending the length of the internship experience.

Policies and Procedures

1. Explanation of Requirements:

One to two weeks before the semester begins, the Special Education Program's clinical supervisor will make the SPED Internship Blackboard site available to interns. Prior to the semester beginning, interns will need to log-in to this site to obtain a copy of the *SPED Internship Requirements* accessible through "Internship Orientation" button on the menu bar. In addition to this document being available, so will a video recording explaining these requirements. Again, interns will need to have an understanding of internship requirements prior to the start of the semester.

At the onset of internship, interns will be responsible for sharing the *SPED Internship Requirements* with their mentor teachers.

2. Collaborative Meetings

Collaborative meeting/s will be conducted with each intern, his/her mentor teacher, and university supervisor. This meeting/s will be conducted to evaluate performance, to discuss timelines, to problem-solve issues/concerns, and to pose questions/answers relative to requirements.

Note: It is UND's policy not to provide onsite visits at a distance, as the direct supervision of internships is completed by an onsite mentor teacher, who has been approved by the University and school district. If an onsite visit is requested by the student or the school site, any travel expenses will be paid by the student or the school, depending on who is requesting the site visit.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROCESS FOR SPED INTERNSHIPS

When concerns arise, this is the process that will be followed by building (mentor teacher) and UND supervisors:

1. There should be sufficient documentation that all supervisors (mentor teacher and UND supervisor) have provided the intern with direct feedback. Suggestions for improvement should be provided both orally and in writing.
2. If the concerns that have arisen are related to the intern's disposition, the disposition form will be filled out by the UND supervisor, inclusive of feedback provided from the intern's mentor teacher. The disposition form will then be shared with the intern and their mentor.
3. If the concerns that have arisen are related to the intern's teaching, the intern will be asked to arrange for a live feed of their teaching, or to submit a videotape of themselves teaching to the University supervisor. The intern will be responsible to secure all permissions necessary from parents, administration, and/or mentor teacher and to provide documentation to the University supervisor that such permission has been received. *The videotape should be sent to Tricia Lee, University Supervisor, 231 Centennial Dr. Stop 7189, Grand Forks, ND 58202-7189.* The University Supervisor will provide written and oral feedback to the intern on the teaching observed in the videotape. These observations will also be shared with the mentor teacher.
4. If, after steps 1-3, there has not been improvement satisfactory to the UND supervisor and mentor teacher, then an improvement plan will be developed by the UND and mentor teacher. ***Changing mentors or placements may be options at this point as well as a lowered internship grade.***
5. If the improvement plan has been implemented and has not been successful, then the UND Supervisor and mentor teacher will sit down with the intern and determine what action to take. The building administrator or special education coordinator may be involved in this discussion, as well. ***Removal from the internship and a failing grade are options that will be considered at this point.***