

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA



Department of Teaching & Learning
Special Education

Local 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 a minimum of **3** visits to each traditional intern and one visit to each on-the-job intern. Try to schedule your visit/s on the same day of an IEP/assessment meeting, so that feedback and suggestions for improvement can be made in this area, as well as the instructional areas. In the case of interns at a great distance, a videotape or live camera feed of the intern teaching may be substituted for one or more of the visits.
- B. Hold a preliminary meeting at the beginning of the semester with all interns to review expectations and assignments for the internship experience.
- C. Observe the intern in a teaching situation during each visit. The results of the observation must then be shared with the intern, preferably both orally and in writing.
- D. Discuss the progress of the intern with the mentor teacher (i.e., the certified teacher who is supervising the intern on-site) on a regular basis. This can be completed in person, by telephone, or by email. Having the mentor teacher record progress in writing to share with the University supervisor is encouraged.
- E. Visit the building principal, or at least introduce yourself, during your first visit and as needed thereafter.
- F. Oversee improvement plans, as well as collaborate with the intern's academic advisor when problems/concerns arise during the internship experience.
- G. Oversee and grade all assignments required for the internship.
- H. 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 observations of the intern's performance.

- I. Manage the SPED Internships Blackboard sites.

The Mentor Teacher is expected to:

- A. Supervise all aspects of the intern's experience, including both personal and professional growth. In the case of a traditional intern this supervision will be provided continuously on-site. In the case of an on-the-job intern, this supervision may be provided either on-site or from a distance. For example, the on-the-job intern mentor may be located at a different school from the intern and consequently may schedule after school meetings with the intern once a week. In addition, the on-the-job intern mentor should be available by phone and email. The expectation is that there is frequent communication between the mentor and the intern, either in person or by telephone/email.
- B. Provide the traditional intern with a caseload of students that will provide the best real-life experience. This should occur approximately during week 3, since the traditional intern should observe and assist you for the first two weeks. Ideally, you should turn over students that 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, although in the case of the traditional intern, the mentor 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 both the student's teachers and parents.
- E. Orient 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. Communicate with the UND supervisor regularly via telephone, e-mail, or in person about your observations of the intern's performance.

- G. 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, the mentor is expected to assist the intern with the assignments and then provide feedback to both the intern and the UND supervisor.

- H. Provide constructive and direct feedback, both verbally and in writing, with the intern on a regular basis. UND supervisor may provide a form for doing this. Your input will assist the UND supervisor in assigning a letter grade for the internship credits in which the intern is enrolled.

- I. 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.

- 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 he/she is 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 his/her 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. Traditional 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, the traditional intern should have full responsibility of a caseload of students. On-the-job interns are encouraged to arrange a time to observe their mentor teacher.

- E. Perform all of the duties of a full-time special education teacher (e.g., planning for and instructing students according to their IEP's, 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. Communicate with the mentor teacher and University supervisor in person, via e-mail or telephone. 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!

- 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, incorporating what is 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. How and when the assignments will be completed should be discussed with both the mentor teacher and the UND supervisor. Note that the grade assigned for the internship experience will be based on the written assignments and the mentor's and UND supervisor's observations of the intern's performance.

- J. Clear all absences such as illness with the mentor teacher and report the absences to the UND supervisor. Note that missed internship hours must be made up, consequently extending the length of the internship experience.

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) 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 University supervisor will schedule additional observations of teaching situations, providing additional feedback and support.

4. If, after steps 1-3, there has not been improvement satisfactory to the UND 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 building supervisor 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.***