Internship Planning Information for Counseling Psychology Students

Document for use by Auburn University Counseling Psychology Students

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide information about internship planning for counseling psychology students. Use this document when strategically planning clinical and educational training experiences to increase your likelihood of successfully competing for desired internship placements.

This document does not replace any guidelines in the Counseling Psychology Program Handbook or in the Auburn University Graduate School and program sections of the Auburn Bulletin. The faculty recommend that a student read all other program documents and make additional notes on this form regarding timelines, deadlines, and sequences within the program that may bear on an internship application. This document is a resource for students, and students should not interpret the absence of something in this document as a sign that a requirement specified elsewhere does not apply to them or as permission not to be knowledgeable about other requirements.

Internship Application Overview

The program requires individuals to complete an internship that at a minimum is an Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) member internship. Students are encouraged to review internship information at APPIC. A variety of internship sites are available and may include, but are not limited to, VA hospitals, general medical hospitals or facilities, university counseling centers, community-based mental health clinics, correctional settings, military settings (both active and civilian positions), and consortia.

Different settings may set different expectations in terms of number of practicum hours, types of training, and settings for applicants to their internship. Students are encouraged to research potential internships that interest them to ensure that they plan to acquire the types of training valued by the site. Students can do this via talking with faculty and reviewing internship sites that match their goals via APPIC. In some cases, the sites may have specific requirements that make it difficult for students to obtain the requisite experiences if they have not identified the unique requirements by the beginning of the spring semester of their second year in the program. In such cases, if students wait to identify unique requirements, they may need to extend their time spent on training prior to applying to internship.

At a minimum, students will complete COUN 8800 to obtain guidance and instruction regarding the internship application process. Students who have not done so earlier should explore potential internship sites on the APPIC website the summer prior to taking COUN 8800. No student may apply to internship without completing or be currently enrolled in COUN 8800.

Internship Application Process

The internship application process is competitive, and internship is important to help students meet career goals. The Counseling Psychology program has criteria regarding
components of the degree that must be completed prior to application to internship. Students are encouraged to review those requirements.

1. Tracking Clinical Hours

In preparation for internship application, students will need to keep a record of all their clinical hours. Frequently, the number of hours required to be competitive to internship sites will exceed the minimum number of hours required by the program. As a general rule, students should aim to complete five hundred (500) direct clinical hours prior to November 1 of the year they plan to apply to internship. Some internships that value assessment may set additional requirements for assessment hours. Frequently these requirements will range from 50 to 200 hours.

Students may want to use Time2Track to easily track clinical training hours online. It is a commercial program, and students would need to pay to use it. The University of Kentucky makes available at no cost an excel file that one can use to track internship hours. The program allows for any of these methods for tracking internship hours to be used. All of these programs align with information that is reported in the APPIC. Students are encouraged to talk with faculty members and peers about the strengths and weaknesses of the different options.

Specifically, students must know the exact activity for each hour (individual, group, outreach, provision of supervision, testing etc.), the demographics of each client (i.e., gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age group, disability status), supervision format for supervision hours (i.e., individual vs. group) and qualifications of supervisors for supervision hours (licensed psychologists, other licensed allied mental health professionals, etc.). Each semester over the duration of training in the program, students will submit a summary of their hours by training site to the Training Director (the Training Director will communicate the proper way to submit the hours). During the internship application process students will review their hours with the Training Director. Students who enter the program with clinical hours earned during a master’s program will need to gather the hours in the format used for tracking doctoral hours for the purposes of their application. The program does not require the student to submit a copy of their master’s program hours, and we do not certify master’s program hours.

2. Applying to Internship

The internship application process involves the submission of a curriculum vitae (CV), several essays, reference letters, summaries of experiences and counts of clinical hours, transcripts, and cover letters to sites. The internship application process does involve fees, and students should review the APPIC information about current fees for submitting applications. COUN 8800 is designed to help students manage these components of the
application process; the course provides guidance on completing the internship application steps.

Sites set their own deadlines for application, but many sites use a November 1 deadline. Students should apply to 12 to 15 internship sites, and students are strongly encouraged to limit their applications to APA-accredited sites. Students must provide evidence that a site is APA-equivalent if they apply to non-accredited sites. The student will need to submit all materials used as supporting evidence to the Training Director at least three weeks prior to the application deadline. Students are prohibited from applying to internship sites without informing the Training Director.

3. Interviewing

After the student submits applications to sites it may be some time before the student hears from training sites. Some sites may also review applications more quickly than others. To the extent that they can, students should respond quickly to requests for interviews and will need to balance agreeing to interviews from multiple sites as well as receiving offers for interviews from more preferred sites when they have already agreed to an interview elsewhere. In general, the world of internship training directors is small, and students should be mindful that training directors may talk with one another. In all cases, students should be timely and respectful in their actions during this scheduling process. Students are encouraged to consult with faculty and the Training Director when they require guidance in balancing the scheduling of interviews. In addition, students should be aware that traveling to in-person interviews may be costly. Students should plan ahead to ensure they can cover the costs of traveling to sites. Although in-person interviews are often not required by sites, there may be some disadvantage of opting for an electronic/phone interview when offered an in-person interview for some sites.

Obviously, if a student cannot afford to attend an in-person interview, the student should request to interview electronically/by phone. Students may also want to be strategic in scheduling their interviews to help manage the costs of travel.

When students interview, the structure of the interview will differ by site, and some sites may not require an interview at all. When offered, the interview is a part of the selection process and may be considered a second step in application. Students will receive additional guidance in preparing for interviews as a part of COUN 8800. The interviews themselves may range from any time after the application deadline for a site until the ranking deadline. Students should also work with their training sites and course instructors if they will miss required work.

4. Ranking

Following the interviews, each internship site will rank order applicants according to their preference for training those applicants. Each applicant will also rank order each site according to desired placement. Students should only rank sites to which they would be willing to be matched.
5. Matching Process

Each year, typically in the middle part of February, the ranking deadline for Phase I of the internship match process will occur. Students will have to register for the match prior to that date (APPIC sets the deadline for this), and students are encouraged to register for the match by December 1 of the fall they apply. There is a fee for registering for the match, and students should ensure that they included the costs of covering that fee in the budget they create for their application and interviews to internship. Students are asked to submit to the Training Director their rankings.

Match day is the day when students find out if and where they matched. The match process is determined by a computer algorithm that accounts for rankings of both applicants and internship sites. Match day is always on a Friday, and students will receive an email notifying them of their match result. Internship directors will typically call their new interns that day, so students are encouraged to have their phones available.

There are several phases during the match process itself. Phase I refers to the ranking deadline for the match. Most individuals will match during Phase I if they match in a given year. In general, this is considered to be the main part of the process by all parties (students, programs, internships). In the event that a student does not match in Phase I, the student should first speak with the Training Director. The student may wish to enter Phase II of the match process.

APPIC holds Phase II in an attempt to fill any unfilled internship slots with applicants. Phase II works much like Phase I, but it is quicker. Only applicants unmatched in Phase I participate in Phase II. Although some good internship sites can be found in Phase II, the number of these are limited. Students should not plan to participate in Phase II. They should do everything they can to submit the best internship application possible and to have the best interview possible so that they maximize their chances of matching in Phase I.

Finally, sometimes internship sites may have unfilled positions after Phase II and will participate in the Post-Match Internship Vacancy Service. This service is available for internship sites that have unfilled positions after Phase II. This process is competitive, and students should not plan to participate in the Post-Match Vacancy Service. However, the Counseling Psychology program will be supportive of students who do not match in earlier parts of the internship match process should they decide to participate in Phase II or the Post-Match Vacancy Service. Program policies about completing APA-accredited (or equivalent with appropriate documentation) apply in this phase as well. Program policies do not allow students to complete internships that are not part of APPIC.

Students will need to consider which option works best for them given that waiting a year may mean additional costs for tuition and that accepting an internship position that is not a good fit may result in difficulty achieving career goals. When students are matched to a position, the match is binding. Students may not complete a second internship because they applied to one that did not fit their goals.