**THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP**

**A Handbook of Guidelines**

School Psychology Program

Department of Psychology

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# Introduction: Program Description

The purpose of this handbook is to provide guidelines for persons participating in the internship experience, PSYC 790, at George Mason University.

The School Psychology Program at George Mason University encompasses a three‑year program of graduate study aimed at standards set by three leading professional organizations for school psychologists. These organizations are the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), Division 16 of the American Psychological Association, and the National Council for Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE).

# Overview of Internship Guidelines

The Internship in School Psychology is seen as that part of the training program providing students and supervisors a chance to evaluate a student's knowledge and skills in a controlled but applied setting. It is viewed as an opportunity for the student to develop a professional identity and move toward assumption of full responsibilities as a school psychologist. The internship is seen as that point of training integrating all previous training experiences by means of practical application in schools and, in some cases, additional educational and mental health settings.

As per NASP guidelines, the internship is provided at the end of the formal training period (e.g., after the completion of at least 60 graduate course hours, including at least 200 supervised practicum hours, in schools and other appropriate settings.

The internship occurs on a full‑time basis over a period of one academic year (10 months; minimum 1200 hours with at least 600 hours in a school setting), or occasionally on a half‑time basis over two consecutive years. Twelve (12) graduate credits are awarded upon completion of the internship.

# Purpose of the Internship Experience

## *Goals*

1. Apply knowledge and techniques in psychology to provide direct interventions to children and their parents, including assessment, counseling, and consultation
2. Provide indirect interventions to children, parents, teachers, and other school personnel, such as consultants, in‑service trainers, and program developers.
3. Demonstrate an orientation as a data‑oriented problem solver, evaluator, and researcher.
4. Demonstrate an orientation as a facilitator, collaborator, or planner in identifying and meeting the mental health and educational needs of indi­vidual systems.
5. Demonstrate an orientation as an advocate or catalyst for the develop­ment of human potential In children, parents, teachers, and other school personnel within a multicultural context

## *Objectives*

1. To provide a broad overview of public school organization, including school policies, personnel practices, and the various specialists employed by schools.
2. To provide orientation to the variety of school services subsumed under the department titles, such as Special Education Services, Pupil Personnel Services, Special School Services, Child Study Services, and the like, as these services relate to the total school organization and to the community at large.
3. To provide special awareness of the relationship between special school service and community services and agencies.
4. To develop sensitivity and understanding for various minorities and to develop assessment and intervention skills with minority children and their parents.
5. To develop understanding and skill in working with teachers and other school staff.
6. To develop sensitivity for and knowledge of classroom interaction and factors influencing classroom atmosphere as well as overall school mental health.
7. To develop an awareness of human growth and development as related to the sequencing of social, emotional, and academic skills and instructional materials and techniques.
8. To enhance the role perception of a school psychologist or a supporting school staff member who has the same commitment to the goals of education as do other school staff members.
9. To provide an opportunity for the student to develop and refine skills in psychoeducational diagnosis, which comprises a comprehensive case study technique.
10. To develop awareness of the variety of sources of information in the comprehensive case study; i.e., the cumulative folder, community agency resources, parent conferences, and the like.
11. To assist the intern in distilling data for a written report and formulation of meaningful recommendations and/or follow‑up case conferences.
12. To help interns develop interview, consultation, and counseling techniques.
13. To focus an intern's attention on the importance of a team approach and on the communication process among child study specialists.
14. To develop a research frame of reference so that the intern is aware of opportunities for research in the schools.
15. To promulgate an attitude of professional ethics, responsibility, and growth in the intern.
16. To communicate effectively with parents and school personnel concerning the implications of psychoeducational information.
17. To be aware of efficient office procedure.

The internship experience is considered to be a cooperative venture among several agencies. However, primary responsibilities rest with George Mason University training programs and the public schools. Other cooperating participants may be from a variety of field agencies. Open lines of communication among all those involved in the internship are essential to provide maximum benefit to interns. It is expected that the internship should be comprehensive and well balanced in roles and functions in school psychology.

## *Site Selection*

The primary consideration in intern placement is the adequacy of a school system as an intern training site, although the needs of the local system must also be taken into consideration. The George Mason University intern program should not be seen as a primary means for the local district to gain assistance with psychometric work.

The following considerations provide general criteria for intern placement.

1. There should be one individual in the school division directly responsible for the supervision of the intern. The on‑site supervisor shall be responsible for no more than two (2) interns. The university supervisor will be responsible for a maximum of twelve (10) interns per academic year. The on‑site supervisor should be a state‑certified school psychologist or a licensed psychologist, and preferably hold National Certification in School Psycholo­gy (NCSP). In some circumstances, either licensed or certified psycholo­gists will be approved to be supervisors. The George Mason University School Psychology Program Committee must approve this supervising psychologist. It is the responsibility of the school system to ask the designated supervisor to send his/her curriculum vitae of training and experi­ence to the program coordinator for approval prior to selection of the district as an internship site. These credentials will be on file with the program coordinator for review by accreditation teams. Once a supervisor is approved and credentials are on file, that person may serve as a supervisor on a continuing basis. Psychiatrists, social workers, counselors, or psychologists may assist with the supervision in the case of agency placements. The expertise and experience of the supervisor will be an important consideration in intern site selection.
2. Adequate facilities for supervisors and interns are important, to ensure maximum efficiency in testing, interviewing, and other intern activities. Office, secretarial, and other professional support must be provided. The school system should provide professional materials and reimburse the intern for mileage and other professional expenses. The interns are given a stipend, either directly to the intern or to George Mason University, which then distributes it on a monthly basis to the intern.

## *Supervision Responsibilities of Local Districts*

It is assumed that the most highly qualified person available will serve in the capacity of supervisor.

While academic degrees and years of experience do not necessarily correlate perfectly with professional competence, it is the best criteria at our disposal, and it is hoped that the supervising school psychologist will have the Ed.S. (or a MA + 30 credit equivalent), Ed. D., Ph.D., or Psy.D. degree and *three years of experience*. The supervisor is seen as an exceedingly important professional model, as well as one who is responsible for the administrative welfare of the intern.

It is felt that the student provides a sufficient amount of service to the school district to justify the release of two hours per week of an internally employed supervisor from regular duties or case load. If a qualified internal supervisor is not available from the school district, the program coordinator will assist in locating a qualified supervisor who could be employed by the school district for that specific purpose. However, it is the school district's responsibility to obtain a supervisor acceptable to the program staff. Any fees for supervision must be paid by the school district.

## *Supervisory Personnel*

Two persons have primary responsibility for internship supervision. They are theGeorge Mason University Internship Coordinator (the school psychology trainer) and the field supervisor (the on‑site supervising school psychologist).

1. The Internship Coordinator

The internship supervisor is the field representative of the School Psychology program at George Mason University. He/she is the liaison between schools and agencies, the School Psychology Program Coordinator, and the School Psychology program faculty member. The responsibilities of the Internship Coordinator include the following:

* 1. All internship plans to be consummated with a school district or agency should be cleared with the Internship Coordinator.
  2. The internship site selection and arrangements are to be planned and implemented by the Internship Coordinator. He/she is re­sponsible for:
     1. Making contracts for each intern placement with the school district or agency supervisor.
     2. Arranging for on‑site supervision for the intern. If no accept­able on‑site supervisor respon­sible for making alternate arrangements.
  3. Provide internship guidelines for both the intern and the supervising psychologist and ensure that these arrangements are mutually agreeable to the supervisor, the intern, and the School Psychology program staff.
  4. Discuss the intern's work with the supervising psychologist and other appropriate persons in the school district or agency.
  5. The coordinator plans his/her visits in advance and informs the intern and supervising psychologist of the nature and extent of his/her planned visit. At least one visit per semester will be made by the Internship Coordinator.
  6. Designate the final grade for the internship experience for university records. This grade should be determined by mutual agreement with the supervising psychologist at the internship site. See Intern Evaluation Checklist.
  7. Plan the internship experience with the supervising psychologist so that it is the most meaningful experience for the intern and, when possible, so that it also meets the on‑site needs of the employing school district or agency.
  8. Critically evaluate the professional log of the intern. If areas of student improvement are needed, it is the responsibility of the coordinator to attempt implementation of these improvements with the student and the supervisor.
  9. If questions of professional ethics arise, the coordinator is expected to respond appropriately and, if necessary, to seek the advice of School Psychology Program colleagues.

1. Supervising Psychologist's approved by the George Mason University School Psychology Program

He or she must be certified by the Virginia Depart­ment of Education for practice as a School Psychologist or be certified as a School Psychologist in the state that the student is seeking to be placed as an intern. Other personnel may work in a supervisory capacity over the school psychology intern for internship settings other than that of school systems (psychiatric social workers, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, special educators, and the like) but they must be members in good standing with their respective profes­sional organizations and certified by approving state agencies. The supervising specialist who assumes the responsibility for directing and supervising the school psychology trainee should be an individual of proven excellence in this field. He/she should be capable of guiding the graduate student successfully through the internship experience.

The Supervising Psychologist will be expected to fulfill the following responsibilities:

* + 1. Coordinate the internship program with the public school administrators or agency directors and the George Mason University program.
    2. In conjunction with the Internship Coordinator, the Supervising Psycholo­gist/Specialist should provide an orientation period for interns at the beginning of an intern experience.
    3. The Supervising Specialist/ Psychologist will have a minimum of two (2) hours per week of evaluative conferences with each intern.
    4. He/she should provide interns with as many activities described as are essential for an effective internship experience, as listed in Section D and the attached checklist.

1. Grade evaluation of the intern will be a joint effort between the coordinator and the supervisor, and is based on competency in activities listed, effectiveness in relating to school staff, and development of an identification as a professional school psychologist. The supervisor should forward to the program a final written evaluation of the intern's performance, including completion of the intern competency checklist (see the end of the document).

# Intern Responsibilities

## *Professional Conduct*

In order to enhance identification as developing school psychologists, students should conduct themselves with the same degree of responsibility as do regular employees of the system or agency.

Interns are required to write logs of their experiences and monthly submit theseprofessional logs to their field supervisors and the Internship Coordinator of the program. Logs will document intern experiences listed on the experiential checklist, which is attached. Reports and experience summaries may be required to validate intern experiences. Logs, reports, and summary write‑ups become parts of permanent intern files and provide documentation about an internship when required. See attached sample log.

Intern conduct should be governed by professional ethical standards and guide­lines, as stated by the American Psychological Association and the National Association of School Psychologists.

## *Requirements*

The internship coordinator and the supervising psychologist will plan the pro­gram requirements for student interns. Day‑to‑day responsibilities and activities of interns are described in Section D. The internship requirements will reflect a degree of flexibility dependent upon individual interns' backgrounds and education.

1. Psychological Evaluation Procedures

Interns should be able to use a wide variety of evaluation instruments and proce­duresthat will yield information related to the following areas:

* + - * 1. patterns of intellectual functioning
        2. achievement levels in academic skill areas
        3. diagnostic skills in reading and arithmetic areas
        4. psychological processes
        5. psychomotor developmental patterns and skills
        6. social-emotional development patterns and skills
        7. interpersonal relationships
        8. behavioral traits and presence or absence of severe emotional disturbance
        9. diagnostic observations of overt behavior
        10. diagnostic interviews
        11. behavioral assessments of a child in live situations
        12. adaptive behavior/developmental levels
        13. pre‑vocational or vocational skills

1. Reports

Interns will be required to prepare and submit reports on cases to which they are assigned. The supervising psychologist will critically evaluate these reports. All supervisors will hold students to professional levels of writing excellence and a high level of integration and efficiency in report writing. Students in the program are indoctrinated with the philosophy that competent psychologists use tests and test results to stimulate and sharpen their thinking about the dynamic functioning of the child. Tests provide information that must be verified by other data and by direct behavioral observation.

The supervising psychologist should co‑sign and date all reports submitted by interns.

# Intern Activities

The coordinator and supervisor will determine programs of activities individually prescribed to suit the needs of each intern. Interns should be included in this planning process. Some supervisors may wish to prescribe in writing the required intern activities; others may prefer to plan on the basis of informal agreements. In either case, requirements should be clear to interns.

Supervising psychologists will wish to engage interns in most of the following activities:

## *School Orientation: General Overview*

1. classroom observations (special education and regular classroom)
2. professional teacher programs and meetings
3. administrator and staff meetings
4. in-service training sessions
5. meetings of special services personnel (eligibility committees, screening committees)
6. IEP committee meetings
7. school board meetings
8. PTO meetings

## *Orientation to Child Study or Special Services In the School and/or Community Agencies*

1. informal interviews with special educators, principals, reading specialists, teachers, nurses, social workers, visiting teachers, speech therapists, guidance personnel, and other specialists
2. observations in special education classrooms and programs
3. involvement in case conferences with teachers and specialists
4. exposure to routine office procedures (record keeping, report writing, forms, bulletins, folders, file systems, correspondence, test supplies and orders, and the like).
5. visits to special services (United Fund, State Employment Service, civic service organizations, Big Brother program, specialists in private practice, and the like)
6. visits to relevant parent groups and organizations (Association for Retard­ed Children, Lion's Club, Association for Children with Learning Disabili­ties, etc.).

## *Development Skills in Psychoeducational Diagnosis and Formulation of Recommendations*

1. opportunity to observe and evaluate a variety of types of exceptional children
2. opportunity to receive referrals and work with a variety of types of referral problems under supervision (class placement, admission or exclusion, learning/behavior problems, and the like)

## *Orientation to Classrooms*

1. planned classroom observations across a range of school grades
2. conferences with curriculum specialists and supervisors of instruction
3. discussions with teachers
4. discussions with administrators

## *Development of Skills in Interviewing, Counseling, and Consultation*

1. supervised data gathering interview with pupils, parents, and teachers
2. supervised interpretive interviews with pupils, parents, and teachers, in­volving communication or psychoeducational findings, behavioral man­agement, and implementation of recommendations
3. involvement in formal and informal teacher and parent conferences and groups
4. supervised individual and group counseling of pupils supervised participation in preparation of proposals for special education programs, mental health activities in the schools, in‑service training programs, etc.
5. Development of effective and consistent follow‑up activities to case work
6. discussion and implementation of findings at various professional groups (at teacher meetings, at case conferences, etc.)
7. development of effective relations with community agencies for referral, placement, and follow‑up
8. development of awareness of the interrelation of special education, guid­ance services, and other child study specialists, each with a valuable contribution to make to the school setting
9. application of research skills when warranted
10. continuation of professional growth and responsibilities

George Mason University School Psychology Program

# Intern Evaluation Checklist

Intern: Date:

Please evaluate the intern relative to other intern‑level school psychologists in the following context.

1. Apply knowledge and techniques in psychology to provide direct services to children and their parents, including assessment and counseling.

2. Provide indirect interventions to children, parents, teachers, and other school personnel such as consultants, in-service trainers, and program developers.

3. Demonstrate an orientation as a data‑oriented problem solver/evaluator/ researcher. This orientation is evidenced by significant activity in primary research and program evaluation.

4. Demonstrate an orientation as a facilitator/collaborator/planner in identifying and meeting the mental health and educational needs of individual systems.

5. Demonstrate an orientation as an advocate/catalyst for the development of human potential in children, parents, teachers, and other school personnel within a multicultural context.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Specific Feedback Points | poor | fair | average | above average | excellent | Comments |
| 1. Level of knowledge and understanding of professional issues (e.g., current and best practices in school psychology, educational curricular, special education, regulations, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 2. Level of knowledge and understanding of child development and maturational processes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 3. Level of knowledge and understanding of learning disorders | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 4. Level of knowledge and understanding of emotional and behavior disorders | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 5. Ability to interact effectively with children, adolescents across multicultural backgrounds and age span. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 6. Ability to interact effectively with parents, teachers, and other school personnel across multicultural backgrounds | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 7. Proficiency in administering and interpreting basic cognitive instruments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 8. Proficiency in administering and interpreting basic psychoeducational instruments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 9. Proficiency in administering and interpreting basic personality and behavioral rating instruments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 10. Proficiency in administering and interpreting developmental and preschool instruments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 11. Proficiency in collecting data in an intake interview and record review. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 12. Quality of psychological reports (well-written, integrated, and good recommendations) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 13. Counseling skills (individual or groups, parent, and family | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 14. Consultation skills (individual case consultation, program design and implementation) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 15. Ability to make presentations (at staff in-service sessions, PTO meetings, etc.,) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 16. Program development skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 17. Research and program evaluation skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 18. Overall professional image (including dress, demeanor, and self-confidence) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 19.Reliabiity, dependability, follows professional ethical procedure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 20. Initiative, ability to work independently | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 21.Preparation: Arrives on time for supervision meetings, reviews case materials prior to meetings, develops good questions for supervisor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 22. Responds professionally to supervisor’s recommendations and shows a willingness to learn new information and develop new skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |

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Supervisor’s signature Date

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Intern’s signature Date

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University Intern Coordinator Date