

**Master of Public Administration Program
The Graduate School at the
University of Charleston, South Carolina**

PUBA 777 Internship Handbook



MPA Program Website
www.puba.cofc.edu

MPA Internship Program Handbook

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I. Introduction

The MPA internship requirement is an integral part of preparation for a student's employment in the public or nonprofit sector. The internship is a supervised, field experience in which the student participates in the functioning of a public/nonprofit organization. A graduate internship is designed to gain valuable professional experience in a career field in which the student has interest. Given its importance, the student should begin examining internship opportunities as soon as possible after beginning the MPA program. To ensure the appropriate internship placement, the student should explore as many opportunities as possible.

A student must have completed fifteen (15) hours in the program before registering for the internship. The student should confer with the Program Director prior to seeking an internship. Enrollment and registration for the internship must be completed in conjunction with the Graduate School's established registration procedures and deadlines prior to the term the student begins the internship.

Students will be required to work no fewer than 150 hours over the course of the semester for three hours of internship credit. A contract is required between the supervisor, student and program director. The student will be expected to satisfactorily meet the expectations of the agency. To that end, the M.P.A. director and the internship coordinator will periodically evaluate the student's performance, and consult the on-site internship supervisor. Finally, the student must submit several short papers that describe their duties and responsibilities and assess their experience in light of key concepts in public service management. Internship supervisors will provide valuable feedback to the program regarding the student's performance and capabilities and this feedback will become part of the program's evaluation of the student's work.

A paid internship is a reasonable expectation for a graduate student. However, students may be faced with taking an unpaid internship in their area of interest. It is a difficult decision and should be discussed with the MPA Director. Beginning the internship search early and exploring as many opportunities as possible will increase the probability of a paid internship. Students may also consider completing an internship out of the local area during the summer.

Students who are working in the public or nonprofit sector or have significant work experience, at least two years, may be granted an internship waiver. If granted, the student is required to take an additional elective course.

Purpose of the Internship:

- To bring a real-world element to your well-rounded education.
- To provide valuable experience and an opportunity to create contacts within the community.
- To potentially lead to a full-time job upon graduation.

Internship Waiver requirements:

- Relevant previous work experience in the public or nonprofit sector (2 or more years).
- A submission of your resume to the MPA Director requesting an internship waiver (Director may request additional information).
- Approval from the MPA Director.

II. Internship Description

General Description – PUBA 777 Internship

A supervised field experience in which the student observes and participates in the functioning of a public sector or a nonprofit organization for at least 300 hours. The internship is graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis.

Generally, the internship experience involves 12 hours per week for a period of 12 weeks (Summer Term) or 10 hours per week for a period of 15 weeks (Fall & Spring Terms). Students planning to complete their internship must enroll in PUBA 777 and pay full tuition for 3 credits in the semester that the internship class is to be completed.

Internship Prerequisites

In order to be eligible, each student must have completed the following prior to the term in which the student seeks internship credit:

- Completed 15 hours of PUBA coursework
- Earn a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or greater (i.e. good academic standing)

- Preparation of a professional resume and cover letter
- Identification of internship and career goals
- Discussion of tentative plans for the Internship, including potential agencies, with MPA Director
- Completion & submission of the following forms to the MPA Office and the Graduate School Office:
 - **Internship Site Selection Form**—Notifies MPA Director of site selection and receives their approval
 - **MPA Internship Agreement**—contract between the student, agency supervisor, and the MPA Program Director that the internship will be carried out and meets requirements of the program
 - **Individual Enrollment Form**—Student registers for PUBA 777 in the designated term via the Graduate School

Internship Requirements

- Site selection approval
- Ongoing communication with the Director (2- 3 meetings)
- A minimum of 150 placement hours
- A series of three short (5- 7 pages) papers describing duties and responsibilities and assessing the internship experience in light of key concepts in public service management.
- Employer Evaluation of Student Intern Form
- Student Evaluation of Site and Employer Form

III. Internship Policies

Length of Internship

Generally, the internship experience consists of 12-15 weeks of part- time work per week, for a total completion of 150 internship hours. Except in unusual circumstances, the Internship is to be completed during a given semester (or combined Summer Sessions). However, some students may choose to participate in a full- time internship, in which case the internship can be completed in as little as 8 weeks. The student and the agency supervisor should determine the specific scheduling of work hours per day and per week based upon each party's needs and availability. Approval of the agreed upon

work schedule from the MPA Director is required only to ensure that the internship can be reasonably completed within the 12-15 week term.

Early Start or Late Completion Policy

Except in unusual circumstances, the Internship is to be completed during a given semester (or combined summer sessions). Specifically, all work-related hours credited to the Internship experience are to be completed between the first and last day of classes. If the student selects an Internship agency that requires an early start or late completion, all work-related hours that are not during the semester (or summer sessions) will not be part of the Internship experience. Early start and/or late completions are considered to be voluntary arrangements between the student and the agency. Late start dates may require the student to defer the semester grade, which would therefore potentially delay the student's graduation plan.

Missed Deadline Date

Any student who misses the deadline date for submission of internship materials will be required to schedule the internship in a subsequent semester.

Finding & Selecting an Internship Site

While it is the responsibility of the student to identify potential internship agencies and seek out a position, the MPA Office will make every effort to assist in this process.

In order to assist students with identifying and selecting agencies that meet their educational and career goals, the MPA Office maintains a website with selected internet resources and directories, as well as a listing of agencies where students have previously completed internships.

Local agencies can also access a Request for Intern form on the MPA website. Available internship openings that the MPA Office is made aware of will be posted. These resources enable each student to identify agencies that may serve as suitable internship experiences.

To be eligible for participation as an approved Internship site, an agency must:

- Be professionally recognized as nonprofit or public organization whose primary operations relate directly to the field of public administration.

- Offer opportunities for observation and participation in those aspects of their programs, operations, and administrative procedures that correspond with a given student's educational needs.
- Have facilities and equipment that conform to contemporary standards and are appropriate for meeting student needs.
- Employ staff members who are qualified, through education, experience and/or certification, to provide supervision to Internship students.
- Have sound administrative procedures in the areas of budget, public relations, personnel policies, operations and maintenance, in-service training, etc.
- Provide minimal financial and other resources necessary to support the efforts of an Internship student; specifically, the agency agrees to provide materials necessary to complete a special project and to allow the student to make essential phone calls and/or send emails to his or her Faculty Supervisor.

Agency Supervisor

Each Internship agency will designate one professional staff member to serve as the student's agency supervisor. This individual is responsible for ensuring the quality of the internship and to aid the student in their professional development to help the student meet his or her Internship goals.

Affiliation Agreement required by the Agency

Should a prospective internship agency require a cooperative agreement between the MPA program and the internship site, the MPA office will forward the agency's agreement to the University's legal counsel for review and negotiation (if needed). Once approved by legal counsel, the University will sign the agreement and forward one signed original back to the agency. NOTE: Approval by PSU's legal counsel may take several weeks to secure.

Changing Internship Site

Once signed paperwork is submitted to the Department's Internship staff assistant, the student will be expected to fulfill his/her commitment to the chosen internship agency. Should a student wish to change an internship site after submitting an approved internship to the Department, the student must make that change prior to the internship deadline and **only with approval of the MPA Director**.

IV. Internship Agencies & Recent Placements

Recent Internship Placements

- Town of Mount Pleasant
- Town of James Island
- College of Charleston Foundation
- Charleston City
- Ohm Radio
- Gaillard Center
- Joseph P. Riley Center for Livable Communities
- Town of Sullivan's Island
- Charleston Meals on Wheels
- Charleston County Planning Department
- Mt. Pleasant Musical Theater Center
- City of Folly Beach
- Lowcountry Open Land Trust
- Charleston Waterkeeper
- Ronald McDonald House
- Center for Heirs' Property Preservation
- Jazz Artists of Charleston

Internship Contacts

These are institutions and organizations who have hired interns during in the past. This list is intended to generate ideas about possible internship placement and is in no way a guarantee of internship opportunities.

- Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments
 - Kathryn Basha, Planning Director
 - kathrynb@bcdcog.com
 - (843) 529-0400

- Town of Moncks Corner
 - Jeff Lord, Town Administrator
 - jeff.lord@twm-mc.com
 - (843) 719-7910
- Lowcountry Local First
 - Brian Wheat
 - brian@lowcountrylocalfirst.org
 - (843) 801-3390
- Ashley Cooper Stormwater Education Consortium
 - Guinn Wallover, Water Resources Ext. Agent
 - cgarre@clemson.edu
 - (843) 730-5210
 - Kim Counts Morganello, Water Resources Ext. Agent
 - kcounts@clemson.edu
 - (843) 730-5212
- SC Community Loan Fund
 - Anna Hamilton Lewin, Chief Operating Officer
 - anna@sccommunityloanfund.org
 - 843-973-7285 ext. 404
- Town of James Island
 - Kristen Crane, Planning Director
 - kcrane@jamesislandsc.us
 - (843) 795-4141

- Town of Mount Pleasant
 - Martine Wolfe-Miller, Communications Officer
 - mwolfe@tompsc.com
 - (843) 884-8517

See Program Website (puba.cofc.edu/current-students/mpa-internship/index.php) for internship forms:

Internship Site Selection Form

Internship Agreement Form

Internship Enrollment Form

Employer Evaluation of Student Intern Form

Student Evaluation of Site and Employer Form