

HR683: MSHR Field Experience FAQ and Overview

Purpose of the Field Experience

Having “hands-on” experience in the field of human resources is critical to becoming a competent HR professional. All students who do not have 5 years of recent continuous full-time work experience in HR and/or PHR/SPHR certification must complete a 150-hour supervised internship (those having this experience/certification may substitute another WCU HR course elective in lieu of HR683). The purpose of the field experience is to provide students’ current knowledge of various work environments in which they will apply their newly acquired human resource skills. The field experience provides opportunities to explore various career options and to gain valuable work experience.

Field Experience Team

The field experience team consists of the human resources intern, the WCU instructor/supervisor, and the field supervisor (person at the job site).

The responsibilities of the Intern include:

- Consulting with WCU field experience instructor/supervisor to make arrangements for doing an internship (consultation should ideally take place the semester prior to field placement).
- Selecting a field site and supervisor.
- Enrolling in HR 683 Field Experience In Human Resources
- Completing the course requirements for HR 683.

The responsibilities of the WCU Instructor/Supervisor include:

- Assisting interns in selecting an appropriate field site and supervisor (although the ultimate responsibility of finding an acceptable field experience site is the student’s).
- Orienting interns to the field placement experience.
- Helping interns complete the necessary field experience paperwork (Learning Contract, Periodic Status Reports, Field Experience Log, Final Report).
- Monitoring the intern’s progress in completing the Learning Contract.
- Helping interns resolve any problems they may encounter during the field experience.
- Collecting feedback from field supervisors regarding the work of interns.
- Evaluating all documents submitted by interns.
- Giving interns a final grade of Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U) for HR 683 Field Experience in Human Resources.

The responsibilities of the Field Supervisor include:

- Assisting the intern in completing the learning contract.
- Supervising the work of the intern.
- Reading and signing periodic field status reports.
- Providing periodic feedback to the intern and the WCU instructor/supervisor.
- Evaluating the work of the intern.
- If appropriate, providing the intern a letter of recommendation upon the completion of the field experience.

Field Experience Checklist

It is recommended that students follow these steps in meeting their field experience requirement.

- ___ Carefully read over the contents of this Internship FAQ and other relevant documents located in the MSHR Student Commons (located in Blackboard) under “Field Experience Resources.”
- ___ Review and refine short range career goals, identify gaps in work experience which can be closed during the field experience
- ___ Consult with the WCU instructor/field supervisor as early and as often as needed to select an internship site (ideally, such consultations should take place at least six weeks prior to the end of the semester preceding the field placement)
- ___ Meet with potential field site supervisors as early and as often as needed to explore potential field placements
- ___ Pre-register for HR 683
- ___ Select a field placement site
- ___ Complete & return signed Agreement Form & Learning Contract
- ___ Begin working on goals and tasks as stated in the Learning Contract
- ___ Keep a time log detailing work performed
- ___ Collect artifacts to place in Final Report
- ___ Revise Learning Agreement as needed and approved by WCU supervisor
- ___ Turn in periodic Status Reports
- ___ Participate in scheduled online class meetings
- ___ Complete & turn in Final Report
- ___ Secure copy of evaluation form & letter of recommendation from Field Site Supervisor

Selecting A Field Supervisor

It is important that students select a field placement site and supervisor that meet their particular career objectives. If necessary or desirable, students may elect to do their internship with their current employers. This can be in another department and/or another facility. Students may also elect to do their internships in a different organization or industry from which they are currently working. This is recommended for individuals planning to change employers or industries upon graduation.

All Field Supervisors (persons who supervise and mentor interns at the field placement sites) must have at least five years of work experience as a human resource professional. It is highly preferred that supervisors will have a master's degree in a related field.

When selecting a field placement location, ask the following questions:

1. Do I plan to remain with my current employer after graduation?
2. Do I plan to relocate to a different city after graduation?
3. What type of position do I aspire to after graduation?
4. What industry do I wish to work in after graduation?
5. What experience and/or skill gaps must I close in order to be promoted or hired into my desired career position?
6. Where can I get the needed experience and skills to increase my chances of securing my desired career position?

When selecting a field supervisor, ask the following questions?

1. Does this person have at least five years of work experience as a human resource professional?
2. Does this person have the desire, time, and skills to adequately supervise and mentor me?
3. Is my personality compatible with my supervisor's?
4. Does this person possess cutting-edge knowledge in areas of major interest to me?
5. Is this person well known and respected in the human resource community?
6. Would this person be a good career sponsor (i.e., one who would be very helpful in assisting me with going to my next career level)?

Preparing The Learning Contract

The Learning Contract serves as the main planning and project management tool for the Field Experience In Human Resources. The document contains 3-5 professional development goals the intern is seeking to accomplish through the field experience. Associated with each goal are 3-5 tasks (parts of various projects) the intern will complete in order to achieve her/his desired professional development.

Follow these steps in completing the Learning Contract:

1. Update your short-term career objective (the career goal you wish to achieve within 6-12 months after graduating from the MS Degree Program in Human Resources).
2. Review various competencies required of individuals working in your particular area of human resources.
3. Review your current resume to see if there are skill and/or experience gaps that will need to be closed in order to achieve your short-range career objective.
4. Write down a few skills and experience gaps that you want to close during the field experience.
5. Based on your gap analysis, write down 3-5 professional development goals that you wish to accomplish during the field experience.
6. Discuss your professional development goals and potential field placement sites with your WCU field experience instructor.
7. Hold exploratory field placement interviews with 2 or 3 potential field supervisors (learn about supervisor and opportunities to work on projects that will enable you to achieve your professional development goals).
8. In consultation with your WCU field experience instructor, select a site and field supervisor for your internship.
9. Meet with field supervisor to fill out the Field Experience Agreement Form and Learning Contract.
10. Secure the approval of the WCU instructor/supervisor.