

Intern Problem Solving and Support Procedures

Most interns will need extra support at some time during the year, and a small number will experience difficulties severe enough to keep them from finishing their programs. This suggests a series of steps that instructors (including mentor teachers, field instructors, and 801-4 instructors) can take to assure that interns are afforded due process, including the following:

- interns needing support get the full benefit of the resources that the program has available;
- no intern is subjected to arbitrary action without being fully informed of the reasons for that action and having an opportunity to correct his or her problems; and
- the program has adequate documentation to support and justify any actions that are taken.

Routines to follow for all interns

There are some things that instructors should do routinely for all interns that will turn out to be especially useful for interns who need additional support. They include the following:

1. *Regular contact among instructors.* Field instructors and mentor teachers should share information and ideas regularly and informally about the interns for whom they are responsible.
2. *Record keeping.* Field instructors, as a primary responsibility, and other instructors as appropriate, should keep documentation of substantive discussions with interns and mentor teachers.
 - Keep copies of notes from classroom observations. (The carbonless observation forms make it possible for observers to keep copies for themselves while giving copies to the intern and mentor teacher.)
 - copies of notes from meetings or conferences, particularly including notes about work that the intern is expected to do or changes that he or she is expected to make as a result of the discussion;
 - copies of lesson plans, unit plans, or teaching materials that the intern shared, and copies of responses from instructors as appropriate;
 - copies of materials used in assessment conferences, including assessments by the field instructor and mentor teacher, and the intern's Professional Development Plan.

Informal consultation with and about interns

If a problem seems particularly persistent or troublesome, then any instructor who is concerned should informally consult with other instructors and the team coordinator and field instructor coordinator to see if they share those concerns. The consultation should include the following:

1. *Consultation.*
 - If one of the instructors is concerned about classroom teaching, then he or she should request additional observations from other instructors (i.e., the field instructor, and/or the mentor teacher), either directly or through the team coordinator.
 - The field instructor coordinator and the team coordinator should be notified about the instructors' concerns.
2. *Record keeping.*
 - Make sure that notes or other written feedback include clear statements or explanations of the problem(s).

- Keep notes about who was consulted and when, including copies of E-mail contacts and other informal contacts.
- Keep copies of observation notes or feedback from the mentor teacher and other instructors.

Discussion in assessment conferences

Regularly scheduled assessment conferences should provide opportunities for discussion of most concerns. Professional Development Plans should address those concerns. If the intern's problems are so severe that they threaten his or her continuity in the placement or completion of the program, then the team coordinator and field instructor coordinator should be consulted and a Professional Growth Conference should be set up (see below). Less severe problems should be addressed during routine assessment conferences.

1. Consultation. The field instructor and the mentor teacher should consult one another *before* the assessment conference and reach agreement about (a) how to discuss concerns with the intern and (b) what kinds of steps the intern should take to address those concerns. The field instructor coordinator and/or the team coordinator should be consulted if the field instructor and the mentor teacher disagree among themselves or would like additional help.

2. Record keeping.

- The nature and seriousness of the concern(s) should be clearly explained in the assessment forms.
- The intern's Professional Development Plan should include specific steps that the intern will take to address the concern(s), preferably with deadlines attached. It should also indicate how the program will support the intern in taking those steps.
- The field instructor should send copies of the assessments and the intern's Professional Development Plan to the team coordinators.

Professional Growth Conferences

Program decisions with major impact, including changes in an intern's placement, delaying the beginning or the conclusion of lead teaching, and removal of an intern from the program, should be made *only* after (a) the team coordinator and/or the field instructor coordinator have been consulted and (b) a Professional Growth Conference has been held. Professional Growth Conferences include the intern and appropriate representatives of the program (mentor teacher, field instructor, team coordinator and/or field instructor coordinator). They can be scheduled on the occasion of regular assessment conferences, or at any time that the instructors decide that a conference is necessary.

1. Consultation. The field instructor and the mentor teacher should consult the coordinators and one another *before* the assessment conference and reach agreement about (a) how to discuss their concerns with the intern, (b) what kinds of steps the intern should take to address them, and (c) possible consequences if the intern fails to address the concerns. The field instructor coordinator and/or the team coordinator should also be consulted about the letter written after the conference. Coordinators will consult program leaders and include them in the conferences as appropriate.

2. Record keeping.

- The instructors should *enter* the conference with assessment forms or other written documentation (either the assessment form or other documentation) that (a) clearly explains the nature and seriousness of the instructors' concerns and (b) explains possible consequences if the intern fails to address those concerns. This documentation should be developed in consultation with the team coordinator and/or

field instructor coordinator.

- After the conference one of the instructors or coordinators should take responsibility for writing a letter to the intern that (a) clearly explains the nature and seriousness of the instructors' concerns, (b) explains possible consequences if the intern fails to address those concerns, (c) lists specific steps that the intern will need to take to address those concerns and when those steps need to be taken, and (d) explains how the program will support the intern in addressing the instructors' concerns. This letter should be approved by the team coordinator and/or field instructor coordinator.
- The intern should provide a written response to the letter, indicating that he or she understands the instructors' concerns and agrees to take the steps specified in their letter.
- Both the team coordinator and the field instructor coordinator should have copies of the instructors' letter and the interns' response for their records.

More serious steps

If an intern still fails to adequately address the instructors' concerns even after a Professional Growth Conference, then a variety of consequences are possible, including:

- changing the intern's placement,
- delaying the beginning of lead teaching,
- extending the internship beyond its scheduled conclusion,
- a voluntary decision by the intern to leave the program,
- a grade of 1.5 or less on TE 501 or 502, making it necessary to repeat the internship, or
- dismissal from the program.

1. *Consultation.* The mentor teacher can terminate the intern's placement at his or her discretion. If the intern terminates his or her placement without a Professional Growth Conference, then the program is not obligated to provide another placement. Other actions can be taken by the instructors only with the approval of the team coordinator.

2. *Record keeping.* The team and field instructor coordinator should keep records documenting (a) the action taken, (b) the reasons for that action, and (c) evidence supporting the need for the action. If an intern leaves the program, either voluntarily or involuntarily, then the instructors or coordinators should prepare a memorandum for the team leader and the Student Advisement Office explaining (a) the reasons that the intern left the program and (b) the circumstances, if any, under which re-admission to the program could be considered.