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Externship Program  
Attending Preceptor Manual

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Welcome to the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Optometry (UABSO) Externship Program. This manual has been developed to assist you in optimizing your role as an externship preceptor. We consider externships a key part of the clinical curriculum and are committed to ensuring that the student externship experience is educationally and professionally rewarding. Please read this manual carefully, and if you have questions about the program, direct them to the Director of Externship Program or the Administrative Assistant.

## **PROGRAM OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of the Externship Program at UABSO is to provide our students with a broad-based hands-on clinical experience. Externships are designed to enhance the student's preparation for professional success by application of previously learned concepts to patient care interactions as well as to prepare them for a lifetime of contributions to the profession. During their externship rotations students should gain increased experience in optometric patient care and the diagnosis, treatment and management of ocular disease under the guidance of a practicing professional. Also, depending on the site, experience is to be gained in other specialty areas of optometry (contact lenses, low vision, pediatric vision, sports vision etc.), co-management perspectives, and practice management concepts. In addition to required university-based experiences, students select other externship sites in institutional, hospital-based or multidisciplinary clinics and private practice locations.

### Educational Objectives:

- To develop a high level of competence in the use of optometric techniques, instruments and problem solving roles.
- To engender high standards of professional competence and responsibility.
- To develop the student's ability to work and communicate effectively with other health professionals and ancillary personnel for the sensitive and responsive delivery of eye care.
- To prepare students for lifelong career satisfaction.

### Learning Objectives:

- To demonstrate to the student the art of the practice of optometry as evidenced by the attending doctor/practitioner.
- To widen the student understanding of the broad spectrum of optometry practice by showing the student the clinical conditions and their interaction with each other that make up the wide variety of health conditions in the community.
- To demonstrate the use of common diagnostic and therapeutic procedures involved in the problem solving stages of the delivery of eye care.
- To demonstrate the role of the optometrist in patient education.
- To demonstrate the conscious and purposeful use and development of the doctor-patient relationship.
- To provide practical experience in the office management and business aspects of optometric practice.

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The externship year is divided into three terms. The Summer term is 12 weeks and the Fall and Spring terms are 16 weeks and 17 weeks, respectively. The terms may be further divided into Summer 1, Summer 2, Fall 1, Fall 2, Spring 1, and Spring 2. Students have certain site requirements and have some latitude in selecting their other sites. Each student must spend one of the three terms at the UABSO clinic. To ensure that all students receive a complete clinical experience, it is required that one of the three rotations be hospital-based, institutional or in a multidisciplinary-type environment. The third term may be spent in a private practice environment (optometry, ophthalmology), which allows students to gain administrative experience along with patient care. The third term also may be subdivided into two 6 week or 8 week terms so that the student can get a more diversified clinical experience. Practice management experience (i.e., coding of diagnoses and procedures, learning about practice administration, understanding the legal influences on practice) is considered to be a secondary goal of the Externship Program, and students are expected to add to their knowledge by observing and contributing to the operation of private or co-management practices as permitted by preceptors.

Students are expected to be assigned duties and hours mirroring the typical office hours of the practice, including evenings and Saturdays. Attending preceptors may have students accompany them to professional activities, e.g. study groups, local optometric society meeting, grand rounds.

## **PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

There are currently four Hospital-based/Co-management Staffing sites that must be staffed by UABSO externs every term. Three of these sites are hospital based: the Birmingham Veteran's Administration Medical Center, which requires four externs per term, the Tuscaloosa Veteran's Administration Medical Center, which requires three externs per term, the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (Montgomery, AL), which requires one extern per term. The third site is a co-management center, VisionAmerica Birmingham, which requires one extern per term. One additional student per site (four per term) will be designated as alternates for these sites each term, but will staff the sites only if an assigned extern is unable or ineligible to participate.

All other sites are elective, but they must fulfill the site requirements outlined above. The students generally select sites taken from a roster of approved sites. These sites are in every southeastern state as well as other states across the nation and include solo, partnership and group optometry and ophthalmology practices, multidisciplinary health centers, co-management referral centers, military hospitals and Indian Health Service facilities. Students are also permitted to select a site not on the roster if the site meets the criteria of the program and is approved by the Director of Externships. The application process for those sites/preceptors who wish to become affiliated with the externship program is outlined in the Selection Process section of this manual.

## **PRECEPTOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

Preceptors formally initiate the application process by completing an application form. By signing this form, preceptors agree to serve as a site on the UAB Externship Roster. No obligations are incurred with respect to a specific rotation (year/term) or a specific student, only that all parties (Externship

Director, Administrative Assistant, preceptor, student) will work together to set up a satisfactory arrangement at a time agreed upon. Exceptions, such as a preceptor who wants to limit the preceptor's activity to a particular student, will be considered on an individual basis. The Externship Director will determine eligible sites and preceptors based on space allocation, available equipment, staff support, case load, mode of practice and education.

Preceptors are required to:

1. Provide hands-on clinical experience in the diagnosis, management and treatment of ocular disease and pre- and post-operative care where applicable.
2. Observe students as is practicable and provide advice or demonstration.
3. Be present or ensure that a licensed practitioner is present whenever an extern is providing patient care.
4. Find appropriate alternate activities and supervision in the event the attending preceptor is absent.
5. Ensure that referral letters written by students are reviewed and critiqued as needed.
6. Evaluate the performance of the student and provide direct feedback as needed.
7. Provide students with direct patient encounters.
8. Be available to students at times to answer questions.
9. Coordinate activities of the student at the externship site, including with other professionals and staff in the practice.
10. Ensure that externs are addressed as "Extern", "Student Doctor" or other title that conveys to patients the extern is a student in training and not a licensed practitioner.
11. Assist externs in learning practice management concepts as they apply to the preceptor's practice. (This requirement applies only to preceptors at private practice sites.)
12. Assist externs, if necessary, in locating living quarters for the time period of the externship (the preceptor does not have to provide or pay the extern's living expenses).
13. Sign off on the extern's "Patient Encounter Log" (**weekly form**).
14. Complete and **submit an on-line evaluation form** on the extern's performance as soon as the externship ends. In the Spring Term, the form must be submitted by the designated deadline because of impending graduation. The evaluation guide for completing the Preceptors Evaluation of Extern Performance evaluation forms is found at the end of the externship preceptor manual.

## STUDENT EXTERN RESPONSIBILITIES

UAB externs are required to:

1. Represent UABSO as an institution and themselves as individuals as ethical and conscientious healthcare providers.
2. Assist the preceptor (or other practitioners) in the delivery of eyecare to patients.
3. Conduct themselves in a manner that is ethical and professional at all times.
4. Cooperate with professional and support staff in the delivery of eyecare so as to make a positive contribution to their efforts.
5. Where and when feasible and with the approval of the preceptor, gain knowledge and skills in co-management, practice management and office management.
6. Keep a log of the number of weekly patient encounters (with the preceptor's initials), and disease encounters log and submit to the Administrative Assistant at the end of the rotation.
6. Submit an electronic copy of clinical diagnosis logs.
7. Submit an on-line site/preceptor evaluation form designed to comment on the learning environment and experience, the site, the preceptor(s), and the office staff at the end of the rotation.

## FINANCIAL AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The externship program has no budgeting impact on the School of Optometry. During each rotation, externs must pay professional tuition fees, arrange for travel to and from the site, and as appropriate pay room and board at the site. Occasionally, pre-arranged agreements are made between the school and the site relative to room and board and/or travel expenses. UAB will not incur any of these costs, as the program was designed for no monetary losses to be absorbed by the School of Optometry or the University.

The UAB Professional Liability Trust Fund covers externs for medical malpractice. This is an occurrence type policy, with limits of liability of \$1 million per occurrence and \$3 million annual aggregate. **Affiliation Agreements** (contracts) describing the relationship between the University and the site or facility involved may be initiated by the site (e.g., VA Hospitals, Indian Health Service Sites, Military Facilities, Referral Centers) or by the University if not provided by the site. Affiliation Agreements must be signed by the appropriate university officials and will be returned to the site or facility after all signatures have been executed.

## EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM WEB SITE

The Externship Program web site <http://www.opt.uab.edu/Externship/sLogin.aspx> provides information and services of the Externship Program. The web site contains the externship preceptor manual, preceptor evaluation of externs, preceptor application form, affiliation agreement, the link to Optometry Education Initiative and additional information.

### *Preceptor's initial website login setup:*

1. Go to <http://www.opt.uab.edu/Externship> Click “ *Preceptor*”.
2. Enter your login ID which is sent from the office of UABSO Externship Administrative Assistant, and the temporary password “extern4uabso”.
3. On the new password setup screen, enter your new password and re-enter it to confirm.
4. You will see a confirmation that confirms your new password was created successfully. Now you can use your new password with your login ID to log in the website. To go back to the login page please click “Return to the login page”, or enter <http://www.opt.uab.edu/Externship> into the address box on your browser then hit enter key.
5. You may add the link of preceptor's login page <http://www.opt.uab.edu/Externship> to your Favorites on your browser so you have a quick access to the page.

If you need technical assistances or have any questions or concerns about the web site, please contact the Office of Computing and Data Resources at [jcheng@uab.edu](mailto:jcheng@uab.edu) or (205) 747-7931.

## SELECTION PROCESS

*No student will be eligible for an externship rotation if the student is on academic probation.* Participation in externships is considered a requirement of the academic program, and graduation will be delayed for students who are unable to fulfill their externship requirements by the end of the Spring term of the fourth year. Students should begin to look for a site immediately after the externship orientation meeting in their 2nd year. Students are encouraged to select a site from the established Preceptor Roster, visit the site, meet with the potential preceptor, talk to current and former externs at the site, review prior evaluations of the site/which may be found on-line or in the Administrative Assistant's office (room 307), and meet with the Externship Director or Externship Program Administrative Assistant for advice and counseling when needed. The student is to make the initial contact with the potential preceptor, obtain the preceptor's acceptance for the assigned term/year, and then inform the Director of Externships and the Administrative Assistant by completing and submitting the **Externship Request Form** and the **Preceptor Rotation Selection Form**. If the desired site is not on the established Preceptor Roster, the student must inform the Administrative Assistant that the potential preceptor wishes to participate in the program, so that the required **application** and **affiliation agreement forms** can be completed and submitted by the preceptor. The Administrative Assistant will inform the student of receipt of the completed forms and if the site/preceptor has been approved.

## EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Electronic Performance Evaluation forms have been designed so that the preceptor and the student have the opportunity to evaluate each other. **Preceptor Evaluation of Extern forms** are available on the externship website. The evaluation form must be completed and submitted on-line ([www.opt.uab.edu/Externship](http://www.opt.uab.edu/Externship)) at the end of the term so that a final grade (PASS/FAIL) can be determined. The form that the student and preceptor submits is in scaled question format and asks the student and preceptor to analyze the effectiveness of the preceptor/student and the site in providing an academically-oriented clinical environment. Both forms allow for open-ended comments. Externs are instructed to contact the Externship Director or the Administrative Assistant should any problems arise during a rotation.

## EXTERNSHIP PERIOD

To prevent misunderstandings, conflicts, or problems with the scheduling of patients, students are required to fill out an **Externship Date Verification Form** in consultation with their preceptors. This form is provided at the Externship Orientation, which is scheduled a few weeks before the Summer externship term begins. The form contains the beginning and ending dates for the externship period. The extern must write on the form the dates the extern will be at the site, and any dates of absence during this period that have been approved by the preceptor. This information is particularly important for externs who will serve at Hospital-based/Co-management Staffing sites. Externs who are allowed absences at Hospital-based/Co-management Staffing sites during the scheduled externship period may be required to find a replacement for the days of absence. The Externship Date Verification Form must be signed by both the extern and the preceptor and returned to the Administrative Assistant before the externship assignment begins. Please note that externships assignments must be at least six weeks in length but may be more, depending upon the requirements of the site. Both single and multi-site externships must meet this requirement.

## NORTH CAROLINA EXTERNSHIP SITES

Externs who choose any site in North Carolina should note that they are required to submit to the North Carolina State Board of Examiners, one case report for each week, within 60 days of the completion of their rotation.

Please feel free to contact the Administrative Assistant, Mrs. Perry (Room 307/Email: [CMBB11@uab.edu](mailto:CMBB11@uab.edu) Phone: 205- 934-2624) or the Director of Externships, Dr. Keshia Elder (Room 511/Email: [kselder@uab.edu](mailto:kselder@uab.edu) Phone: 205-934-6773) if there are questions about the externship program.



## Evaluation Guide for Preceptors Evaluation of Extern Performance

- Please use the following guidelines in completing the evaluation forms for your extern(s).
  1. **Unable** to manage any patient care problems
  2. **Unable** to manage many patient problems, including some routine cases
  3. **Able** to manage common problems adequately
  4. **Able** to manage most problems efficiently and responsibly
  5. **Able** to manage almost any problem in an outstanding manner
- The following criteria should be used in determining the extern's performance in the noted areas. Ratings at the top (5) or at the bottom (1) must be accompanied by written comment in the space provided.

### 1. Data Gathering by Case History

Criteria to consider: important case history information, qualification of primary and secondary complaints and symptoms; interviewing format; medical, pharmacological, social and familial information; demonstration of precise objective and reliable observation skills, and ability to formulate diagnostic impressions and design problem specific examination formats.

### 2. Data Gathering by Examination

Directions: Parts (a) through (n) allow you to provide clinical ratings in specific areas. Only give ratings in areas that apply to your mode of practice.

Criteria to consider: performance of all routine tests; time required to perform tests and gather data; efficiency of procedure sequence; appearance of exam forms (careless/meticulous); written verification of signs, symptoms and findings; recognition and attention to visual dysfunctions; identification of medical/systemic disease process; quality and accuracy of procedures; adherence to accepted modes of performing diagnostic procedures.

### 3. Correlating Data

Criteria to Consider: appropriateness of diagnostic sequence to patient problems, signs, symptoms or prior test results; identification of problems not expressed in history; production of a problem oriented data base; use of logical and disciplined reasoning; integration of the art of intuition and the logic of scientific methods.

#### **4. Assessment and Diagnosis**

Criteria to consider: inclusion of data base in diagnosis; derivation of appropriate conclusions from data base; correct assessment of problems in appropriate terminology; utilization of diagnostic protocols; formulation of problem lists and/or a diagnosis that addresses patient's problems.

#### **5. Case Management and Implementation of Diagnostic Plan**

Criteria to Consider: Inclusion of all problems in formulating the management plan; analysis and prioritization of various management options; the addressing of patient fears, expectations and economic concerns; utilization of available resources.

#### **6. Patient Education**

Criteria to consider: psychological aspects of patient care; appropriate discussion of test results, diagnosis, management options/plans with patients; provides appropriate follow up on patient care; completion of paper work, i.e. recalls, reimbursements, etc.; promotion of comprehensive continuous and cost effective patient care.

#### **7. Interpersonal Skills**

Criteria to consider: shows appropriate responses to patient's complaints and concerns; instills confidence by his/her clinical manner; does not alarm patients; approach is refined and not abrupt; shows concern for patient comfort; displays effective and appropriate communication skills; recognizes professional skills of others; employs assistance of other professionals when needed; relates well to other professionals in office and to office staff; accepts criticism tactfully; copes with personal and professional problems with diplomacy.

#### **8. Professional Demeanor**

Criteria to consider: accepts responsibility; accurately assesses one's own limitations; accepts one's own mistakes and learns from them; seeks out new knowledge; improves clinical skills without specific directions; shows initiative in care of patients; demonstrates an affinity for scholarly inquiry; demonstrates critical thinking; assumes responsibility for the development of clinical skills and knowledge.

#### **9. Summary Evaluation**

Assessment of clinical performance is based on the extern's competency or lack of competency in meeting the objectives of an externship (it would be invaluable to question the extern's goals and objectives at the beginning of the rotation). Minimum competencies must be achieved in each area, and an outstanding achievement in one area does not average out an insufficient level of competence in another area.