

Predoctoral Internships in Psychology

What is an internship?

Most doctorate programs in psychology with a clinical focus require the completion of a yearlong full time predoctoral internship program. The predoctoral internship year is an extension of the student's clinical training that takes place at a specific agency apart from the student's school. Internships are usually paid, and the student is contracted to fulfill a certain number of required hours with their internship site in some area of clinical psychology.

Many programs will require an American Psychological Association (APA) approved internship. Some students participate in non-APA approved internships. It is often easier to obtain licensure with an APA approved internship site. Thus, APA approved internships are more desirable and often more competition than non-APA approved internship sites.

You can search for internships in the US and Canada by using the directory at the website for the Association of Psychology and Postdoctoral and Internship Centers:

<http://www.appic.org/>

At this website, there is a page for each internship site which provides information such as program, summaries the number of internship positions offered, stipends, requirements, training opportunities, summary of previous internship class characteristics, etc. The search tool allows you to specify areas of interest and identify potential internship sites that will meet your training needs.

How do I obtain an internship?

Students obtain internships by applying to the Association of Psychology and Postdoctoral and Internship Centers match program. This process is similar to the matching process that medical students go through in order to obtain a residency.

Students must first register for the match. There is a uniform application called the AAPI that all potential candidates must fill out. However, some sites require additional forms and information. Once applications are submitted by the deadlines, internship sites review applications and decided which candidates to interview.

The match occurs after the interview process. Applicants submit a rank list of their most desired internship sites, and internship sites also submit a rank list of their most desired internship candidates. The submission is done electronically and a computer program matches applicants to internship programs based on the rank lists. Applicants who do not match may still obtain an internship through a process called the Clearinghouse, where unmatched applicants make a bid for empty internship positions.

This process may seem very confusing. Therefore, it is advised that you ask questions about the process to your advisor, or someone at your program who is equipped to handle questions about the predoctoral internship match. More information can be found on the APPIC website at www.appic.org.

What are the requirements for internship?

Each program will have their own set of requirements for internship readiness for their students. Please check with your program to verify the requirements for internship. Students usually apply to internship sites in their last year of coursework. At the time of application, students should to have accrued a certain number of intervention, supervision and support hours at their practicum sites in order to be competitive.

It will be important for internship applicants to track their intervention, supervision and support hours so that they can be competitive for internship spots. Hours can be tracked on a spreadsheet or by using services such as Time2Track (www.Time2Track.com). Different internship sites will prefer students with varying experience. It is a good idea to view information on each internship site that you are interested in on the APPIC website in order to know whether or not you will be a competitive applicant.

Does everyone match for an internship position?

Most candidates match but unfortunately, not everyone matches. Internship spots can be very competitive and there are invariably more applicants than there are slots. This is why it is very important to be aware of the characteristics that make internship candidates competitive and to find a match that is right for your interests, experience and needs as a trainee. If a candidate does not match, and does not find a position through the Clearinghouse, they can reapply the next year. This process is often an exciting, yet stressful. Hopefully, the more information you know beforehand and the more support you can get through the process, the more smoothly things will go in you quest for a fabulous and fitting internship spot.

Best of luck!