

# **Guidelines for Clinical Experience**

## **Purpose and Design of Clinical Experience**

The athletic training clinical and field experience is designed to provide students with the various “real life” situations that athletic trainers face on a daily basis. The student will attend both practices and competition. During these sessions, he/she will be responsible for injury prevention, recognition, management, and rehabilitation for athletes affiliated with their particular sport(s). The experience is provided to allow students to develop specific technical skills and knowledge through direct application of services to the athletes.

The general outline of this experience is defined to some extent by the requirements set by the NATA, yet is designed according to the unique opportunities available at the University of North Carolina and the surrounding area. The variety of settings available to students should provide for a diversified experience over the duration of their education, and prepare students for jobs in settings they will most likely be seeking following graduation.

## **Clinical Coordinators**

Joseph Myers, PhD, ATC, LAT  
Steve Zinder, PhD, ATC, LAT

## **Description of Clinical Settings**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill currently fields 28 varsity sports teams which operate out of three training rooms. The training rooms are staffed by nine full-time certified athletic trainers, two of whom also have some responsibilities in the Student Health Service’s Physical Therapy Clinic. Each of these athletic trainers is responsible for approximately two teams. Additionally, several faculty and graduate students from the Department of Exercise and Sport Science, work as certified athletic trainers. All UNC certified athletic trainers serve as approved clinical instructors. In addition to the staff athletic trainers, 1 or 2 graduate assistant athletic trainers enrolled in the NATA accredited Graduate Program in Athletic Training are assigned to each team. These graduate assistants also play an active role in the education and supervision of the undergraduate athletic training students.

The program’s remaining clinical sites are at various settings throughout the Triangle area. The clinical supervisors at these sites are all certified athletic trainers and approved clinical instructors.

## **Statement**

All student athletic trainers must complete a minimum of 1000 clock hours of clinical experience under the direct supervision of approved clinical instructors located in the various clinical sites. These 1000 hours must be accrued over the student's five semesters in the program. Students will likely complete 1000+ hours over five semesters.

The clinical experience will include both athletic practices and competitive events. Some of the practical experience (no more than 275 hours towards the 1000) may extend beyond the traditional setting, into a sports medicine/physical therapy clinic or research laboratory setting that is supervised by a certified athletic trainer.

Each student will rotate through several types of clinical settings including equipment intensive sports, upper and lower extremity sports, male and female teams and general medicine exposure.

### Contractual Agreement

Once students begin their clinical rotations, they are required to sign a contractual agreement (see form), for each clinical assignment, outlining specific responsibilities which will have been agreed upon by both student and supervisor. This contract emphasizes the student's commitment to the clinical experience.

### Enrollment and Grading

Students who have been accepted into the program will be assigned to a clinical site. During the last four semesters students will register for the Clinical Experience course (EXSS 271). The grade for this class is dedicated to their performance in the clinical setting. Part of the student's grade will reflect his/her performance during the clinical experience as assessed through a standard Clinical Evaluation Form (see form). A formal evaluation will be conducted at mid semester and at semester's end. The evaluation will be completed by the approved clinical instructor and discussed in depth with the student so that the student may be aware of his/her strengths and weaknesses. Any breach of the contractual agreement will be documented on the evaluation form. The remaining portion of the grade will be determined based on performance during the signature assignments.

### Clinical Assignments and Rotations

Assignments for the students are ultimately made by the clinical site coordinator following consultation with the other approved clinical instructors. Every effort is made to offer students a variety of experiences (university, high school, clinic, research settings) during their five semesters. **If you are assigned to an off campus rotation you are responsible for the cost of your transportation to that site.**

At approximately mid-semester of every spring, students in the program are asked to rank their preference for clinical sites for the next school year. Prior to semester's end (approximately April 20th), letters of assignment are delivered and students are instructed

to meet with their approved clinical supervisor before leaving for summer break. At this time, students are assigned a reporting date by their clinical instructor. **In most cases students are required to begin their clinical experience several days prior to the start of school (be prepared to begin as early as August 10<sup>th</sup>). Note: vacations, summer jobs, sorority/fraternity functions, etc. are not acceptable excuses.** Students will remain at their clinical site for one semester, with all responsibilities terminating on the day prior to Reading Day. These students will then be responsible for meeting with their clinical instructor for the spring semester before leaving for break. **Again, students may be asked to return to their new sites prior to the start of school (January 3<sup>rd</sup>).** This rotation will also last one semester, with responsibilities terminating on the day prior to Reading Day. Additional supervised hours may be accrued following completion of final examinations if both student and clinical instructor agree.

Those students assigned to winter sports (basketball, wrestling, gymnastics, and swimming) will be assigned to one of the athletic training rooms during the first one-third of the fall semester and the last one-third of the spring semester (or whenever their team is not in season).

### Clinical Progressions

The program director and the clinical site coordinator will make assignments based on the need of each student enrolled in the program. Needs are based on the following criteria (prioritized):

1. Adequate balance of upper extremity, lower extremity and equipment intensive sports, as well as a rotation through general medicine.
2. Adequate balance of types of settings, whereby the student will spend at least one semester in each of the three types of settings: UNC in season sport, UNC out of season sport, and off campus setting (high school or clinic).
3. Adequate balance of men's and women's sports.
4. Variety of clinical instructors, whereby the student will have at least 3 different clinical instructors during his/her last 4 semesters.
5. Future direction of the student, whereby the student will be assigned (if possible) to a clinical site that best represents the setting for which they may seek employment following graduation.

### Student Summary of Clinical Experience

Students will be asked to submit a summary (see form) of their clinical experience at the conclusion of every semester. This summary will help the program director and clinical site coordinator critique the various clinical settings to ensure that students receive what they believe to be a quality experience. Furthermore, the summary will help to validate the program's goals and mission statement.

Students will also submit an evaluation of their approved clinical instructor. This evaluation will serve to enhance the experience of future students by giving the

program director and clinical site coordinator and idea of the performance of the approved clinical instructors.