



[Internships & Cooperative Education](#)

Guidance and Recommendations for Covid-19

Section 1: Background

Internships and Cooperative Education provide valuable, practical, industry/degree-related experience to students. While their significance is undeniable, students' health and safety are of utmost importance. Internship and co-op experiences must meet the guidelines provided in this document.

The term "internship" is used broadly in these recommendations to encompass the range of student experiences and opportunities outside of the classroom, including internships, co-ops, field experiences, whether for academic credit or not. The following guidance is intended to help identify how internships in each college/department will be managed during the health crisis and while extensive social-distancing requirements remain in effect. The protocols are based on the [USA Reopening Plan](#).

Amid the current health crisis, internship sites are strongly encouraged to offer remote or virtual work options whenever possible. Using a set of developed guidelines based upon internship best practices from industry organizations including the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), Cooperative Education and Internship Association (CEIA), and Department of Labor, internships that are maintained in the career management system, [Handshake](#), are vetted and approved by Career Services staff as suitable for student participation. Additionally, in most cases, the virtual experience is promoted as the most appropriate means to participate in an internship while avoiding potential exposure to COVID-19.

Internships that are maintained outside of the career management system, Handshake, are handled by the designated faculty and or staff for each respective college/department. Career Services staff is available to assist in vetting internships and corresponding COVID-19 guidelines with those maintained outside of the management system careerservices@southalabama.edu. Colleges/Departments must share a copy of their amended internship agreements that include COVID-19 protocols with Career Services. Career Services will maintain a shared drive of internship agreements.

Regardless of the nature of the internship, students must ensure that they are taking appropriate precautions and are familiar with the health and safety guidelines in the locality in which they will be participating in the intern experience. Students are expected to comply with the COVID-19 protocols of both their internship site and that of USA. As a rule, if either protocol has a higher degree of constraint, students should adhere to the practice with the

more precautionary protocol. We recognize that the nature of internships may vary; however, all internships must meet or exceed the standards outlined in the [USA Reopening Plan](#).

Section 2: Definition of Terms

ADPH: The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) is the primary state health agency for the state of Alabama.

CDC: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) forms the nation's health protection agency. The CDC saves lives and protects people from health, safety, and security threats.

PPE: Personal protective equipment, commonly referred to as "PPE", is equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious injuries and illnesses.

Vulnerable Populations: Vulnerable populations and people who are at higher risk of severe illness should take extra precautions to avoid illness. Click the link below for more information from the Centers for Disease Control regarding who is considered vulnerable:

<http://bit.ly/CDCIncreasedRisk>

Employer/Internship Site: Used interchangeably based upon the specific agreement and refers to the student's employer, agency, organization, or location.

Faculty/Faculty Advisor/Faculty Supervisor /Internship Coordinator: Used interchangeably to refer to the designated USA faculty or staff supervising the internship experience.

Direct Contact: The experience entails face-to-face interactions between interns/students and the general public.

Low Contact: The experience entails only limited interaction between interns/students and the employees of the internship site. There is no direct face-to-face contact with the general public.

No Contact: The experience entails no face-to-face interaction between interns/students and the general public or internship site employees. All instructions and interactions will occur virtually.

Section 3: General Guidance for Internships

Colleges/Departments are encouraged to allow students to use no contact (virtual) experiences to fulfill degree requirements whenever feasible (see **definitions section**).

For colleges/departments with a required internship and without feasible or available no contact (virtual) experience, the recommendations are as follows:

1. Career Services staff will review the internship description posted in [Handshake](#) to ensure that it complies with the [USA Reopening Plan](#) guidelines, PPE requirements, and ADPH/CDC guidance. The Career Services internship coordinator supports faculty in gathering additional information needed to make a determination about specific postings/organization protocols before faculty choose to require a specific opportunity. Faculty can email careerservices@southalabama.edu to request assistance.
2. For colleges/departments requiring an in-person internship NOT posted in [Handshake](#), the faculty advisor must ensure the internship is in compliance with all [USA reopening plan guidelines](#). The Career Services internship coordinator is available to assist faculty in gathering additional information necessary to make this assessment and any changes to the internship to ensure compliance.
3. Colleges/Departments requiring in-person internship experiences must provide training to students regarding the expectations for compliance with these guidelines while participating in low or direct contact internships and monitor compliance during regular check-ins with students. The Career Services internship coordinator offers assistance with the development and provision of such training. Faculty can email the Career Services internship coordinator at careerservices@southalabama.edu for assistance with the process or contact Career Services at 251-460-6188.
4. Colleges/Departments must require that students, faculty, and/or staff participating in direct contact and low-contact internship experiences comply with the participating site's COVID-19 Protocols AND the [USA Reopening Plan Guidelines](#) .
5. The faculty advisor/Internship coordinator must inform participants that in addition to any requirements of the internship site, all students who participate in in-person internships will complete a health screening form before attending on-campus classes or other activities, and will be referred to Student Health if the screening indicates issues or concerns. Health screening will be completed through the [Jag Healthcheck](#) program or by downloading the recommended [GuideSafe™](#) exposure notification app.
6. If a student, faculty member, or staff member experiences symptoms of COVID-19 while or after participating in internship-related activities or becomes aware that they have been exposed to COVID- 19, they must:
 - a. immediately comply with the protocols established by the internship site.
 - b. stay home, indicate this information on Jag Healthcheck. Students must contact [Student Health](#) and employees must contact Employee Health and Wellness.
 - c. immediately report confirmed cases of COVID-19 to USA's contact tracing team at ReportCovid@SouthAlabama.edu. Instructions on how to report are contained on [USA's Human Resources website](#) and the student section of the University's [reopening website](#).
 - d. report a probable or confirmed case to their faculty/internship coordinator who will then email the director of Career Services at bwgreen@southalabama.edu.
7. Any student who has recently participated in a required internship experience that has tested/is positive for COVID-19 must send an email to their Department Chair/Director AND to the Director of Career Services at bwgreen@southalabama.edu, in addition to

immediately reporting the case to USA's Contact Tracing team at ReportCovid@SouthAlabama.edu following the instructions on the University's [reopening website](#). Any faculty or staff notified by a student who has tested positive for COVID-19 must also follow these notification procedures.

- a. The Career Services director will consult with the USA Contact Tracing supervisor who will determine if the student was in close contact with individuals at the site and provide information regarding the quarantine period if applicable. This information will be relayed to the department chair, program director, or faculty supervisor.
 - b. The internship site supervisor may be notified based upon guidance provided by USA Contact Tracing supervisor. The Career Services director will consult with the department chair, program director, or faculty supervisor to determine who will notify the internship site supervisor based on the relationship with that site.
 - c. The Department Chair/faculty supervisor will pause the internship experience to ensure completion of contact tracing in compliance with the University policy.
 - d. The student may not return to the internship site until they receive clearance from the USA Contact Tracing team or from Student Health. The student should report their clearance to their faculty supervisor to receive approval for their return to the internship site.
 - e. After receiving clearance from USA Contact Tracing and their faculty supervisor, the student should comply with all requirements of the internship site before returning to the site.
8. All USA students and/or staff participating in direct contact and low contact internships must follow the USA face-mask and social distancing requirements while participating and contact their faculty advisor/internship coordinator or the Career Services director if the following requirements are not practiced at the site:
- a. face masks are worn by all individuals in all indoor public areas of buildings and facilities, except when alone in a private office.
 - b. face masks are worn in outdoor areas when individuals are within six (6) feet of one another.
 - c. individuals are able and expected to maintain six (6) feet of social distance from others.
9. If the required internship is part of an existing or new agreement with an internship site, the faculty advisor/internship coordinator must develop, review or amend the agreement to include:
- a. requirements for mask-wearing (see number 8 above)
 - b. requirements that individuals maintain social distancing by remaining six (6) feet apart.
 - c. the expectation that indoor gatherings of more than 10 people are not permitted.
 - d. frequent handwashing/hand sanitization.
 - e. all other applicable [USA Reopening Plan Guidelines](#).

- f. reviewing the host organizations COVID-19 guidelines to ensure that they are in harmony with the [USA Reopening Plan Guidelines](#).
10. The faculty advisor/internship coordinator must review or amend the internship agreement to include a statement alerting that if any student, faculty, or staff become COVID-19 positive during or after participating in a direct or low contact internship that the internship site may be informed of their status by USA Contact Tracing, Office of Career Services, or Internship Supervisor if the USA Contact Tracing Team determines that the intern has been in close contact with individuals at the intern site.
 11. Internship experiences that might include contact with vulnerable populations (see definition above) must receive an additional evaluation from the faculty advisor/internship coordinator for appropriateness. The Career Services staff is available to assist with the evaluation process. Please email careerservices@southalabama.edu to request assistance.
 12. Students who have been determined by their medical provider as high risk for severe illness if exposed to COVID-19 will be provided reasonable accommodations where possible.