



# Health Systems Trust



**Research Programme  
Internship Information Booklet**

### **HST Mission Statement**

Health Systems Trust is a dynamic independent non-government organisation established in 1992 to support the transformation of the South African Health System.

HST supports the development of a comprehensive health care system through strategies designed to promote equity and efficiency in health and health care delivery.

Our goals are to:

- ◆ Facilitate and evaluate district health systems development.
- ◆ Define priorities and commission research to foster health systems development.
- ◆ Build South African capacity for health systems research, planning, development and evaluation.
- ◆ Actively disseminate information about health systems research, planning, development and evaluation.
- ◆ Encourage the use of lessons learnt from work supported by the Trust.

# Research Programme Internship Information Booklet

This Publication is  
ALSO Available on the Internet  
[www.hst.org.za](http://www.hst.org.za)

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401 Maritime House  
Salmon Grove  
Victoria Embankment  
Durban



Tel: +27 31 307 2954  
Fax: +27 31 304 0775  
Email: [hst@hst.org.za](mailto:hst@hst.org.za)  
Internet: [www.hst.org.za](http://www.hst.org.za)

The Internship programme is supported by the  
National Department of Health (South Africa)

## **Introductory note from the Research Programme Director**

The internship programme is one of the skills development initiatives developed by the research programme of the Health Systems Trust (HST). Since it was founded in 1992, HST has been concerned with the need to develop research and planning skills for health care delivery.

The internship programme aims to develop a pool of health systems research skills in South Africa by attaching novice researchers to institutions with established research record.

Interns receive “hands on” training from the early stages of a project up to the final stage of writing reports and disseminating findings. The research findings should inform planning and decision-making at public health services, therefore a close collaboration with public health personnel is highly encouraged.

## **Recruitment and placement**

The host institution should submit a request to host an intern to HST. This request should outline specific skills to be gained, outputs to be achieved, type of support to be provided to the intern, supervisor’s curriculum vitae and a brief summary on initiatives for staff development in the institution. The host institution will recruit the individual(s) for this position. An appointee will have a basic degree and should have theoretical background in research methodology and should be from previous disadvantaged backgrounds. HST will cover the recruitment cost.

## **Internship Foci**

HST has identified the following as priority areas for placement in the internship programme. Currently, these areas are in line with the health reforms in South Africa and might change over time. The institutions applying to host interns in the following areas will receive priority.

- Health Information Systems
- Health Economics and Finance
- Health Policy and Planning
- Human Resource Management
- Health Service Management

## Desired environment for interns

- Academic institution or research unit
- Stability (low turn-over of supervisor)
- Support (academic/project-related/social)
- Access to resources (library, computers and relevant resources based on research topic)
- Regular meetings with supervisor (monthly meetings are recommended)
- Ability to offer a position to intern post-internship programme
- Functional staff development and mentorship programmes
- Friendly and non- threatening working environment which favours multiculturalism

Interns **must** inform HST programme managers if they think that the environment they work under is not conducive to their development. This is one of the most important indicators that will be used to monitor the programme. HST research manager will visit the host institution to ensure that the environment is best suitable for development.

## The training contract

Upon confirmation of appointment, the supervisor and intern should draw up a training programme with specific objectives for the duration of the internship. These are part of the internship contract and should be agreed upon from the beginning, between the supervisor and the intern before the contract is signed.

The programme should outline:

- a) **Specific skills** to be developed during the internship;
- b) A timetable and formula for a training programme by which these skills can be developed. This would include consideration of any external training needs for which HST may be **requested to provide additional financial support**;
- c) Tangible **outputs** for the year which can be submitted to HST to show that the training programme is on track, **and meeting the objectives**

**agreed upon in the contract;**

- d) A discussion of the intern's long (**career plans**) term objectives and the type of **assistance feasible to achieve these**;
- e) An outline of the **type of support or the role** of the supervisor in ensuring that the objectives and intern's needs are met;
- f) HST requires that an intern submit **progress and final reports**. The guidelines are stipulated in the next section;
- g) HST requires that a supervisor submit an **exit report** for each intern hosted by the institution;

## **Exit level competencies**

It is expected that by the end of the internship period, interns would have achieved all of the generic skills listed below. In addition, skills specific to the area of interest should also be included :

- Proposal development (formulating a research question)
- Literature search
- Data collection and collation
- Interviewing techniques
- Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data
- Computer skills : internet, e-mail, MSWord, MS Powerpoint; statistical software
- Presentation skills (small and big meetings)
- Writing of reports and scientific papers
- Additional skills : chairing, writing minutes, group facilitating skills
- Demonstrate some understanding of ways to disseminate findings and influencing policy
- Collaboration with public sector policy-makers
- Progress and final reports should include: the skills developed; examples of outputs; description of the working environment, list of problems or support needed; describe the type of relationship an intern has with supervisor and provide suggestions on how to improve the programme.

## Keeping updated and networking online

- Interns have to send all contact details to the grants administrator within the first week of their employment. The grants administrator's details will be on the contract.
- The grants administrator will also distribute a list of current interns with contact details to all interns.
- If your institution is not online, HST will provide e-mail access.
- All interns will be included in the mailing list in order to get HST publications relevant to their research work.
- To get information on past interns and get subscribed to the internship discussion list, call the grants administrator who will give you step-by-step instructions on how to get access to the database and subscribe to the list.

## Useful Materials and Links

- HST website: [www.hst.org.za/links.asp](http://www.hst.org.za/links.asp)

## HST support

### *What to do if you want to:*

#### **1. Visit another intern for exchange of skills and networking**

- Application should include a letter of motivation for the visit and a letter of approval from both supervisors
- This will be considered only if the HST interns have common research interests
- The intern and the hosting supervisor are required to submit a report on return
- Period of attachment will not be longer than 2 weeks, based on the specific projects negotiated with the hosting supervisor
- HST will cover 70% of the cost related to this visit.

## 2. Interns are encouraged to present their projects at various national conferences

Interns are encouraged to participate in various national conferences where they can present their work. Some annual conferences include: Reproductive Health Priority Conference and Public Health Association of South Africa (PHASA). Interns who will present their work will receive priority.

- The host institution and supervisor will be responsible to encourage the intern to attend and/or present either a poster or paper in **one national** conference
- Application should include letters of motivation from the intern and supervisor, a copy of an abstract submitted and a budget
- HST will cover all cost related to the conference attendance
- For an international conference, supervisors are encouraged to explore funding from international agencies.

## 3. Attend a short course or workshop

- To submit an application letter with motivation from an intern and the supervisor, budget, details about the course, cost and proof of acceptance from the course
- To submit a written report on the short-course upon return
- Interns are allowed to apply only **once** during their programme
- Priority will be given to those who previously have not been supported for conference or visits.

## Support Structure

### Hst

- The grants administrator will provide interns with cell numbers and e-mail address of all members of the Research Programme (refer to Research Programme staff profile on the HST website)
- The first line person to contact is the one listed on the contract. You should always have one copy of the contract to keep
- The HST research manager will document the type of support you need for future programme planning
- The HST research manager will also call you every quarter to talk to

you about the internship programme and will remind you to complete a quarterly evaluation questionnaire.

## **Host Institution**

- One supervisor should take responsibility for an intern
- Other members of the research team can also provide support to an intern but the final responsibility should lie with the supervisor who signed the contract
- The supervisor is expected to provide consistent support throughout the year (refer to the contract).

## **Handling Grievances**

- Supervisors are required to give the intern a grievance procedure/policy upon signing a contract
- Should a grievance occur, the intern is expected to record a grievance and inform his/her Research Manager at HST.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- The intern is expected to complete a quarterly evaluation questionnaire. This questionnaire can be downloaded from the HST research programme website. This questionnaire should be faxed to your Research Manager
- At the end of the programme, the intern should also complete an exit self-administered questionnaire and send it together with a final report to HST.

**THE HST RESEARCH PROGRAMME WISHES YOU A VERY  
SUCCESSFUL AND CONSTRUCTIVE INTERNSHIP**

