

**PRACTICUM GUIDE (ENS 491)**  
***Environmental and Sustainability Studies***  
[www.gvsu.edu/ens/practicum](http://www.gvsu.edu/ens/practicum)

Students pursuing a major in Environmental and Sustainability Studies are required to complete 2 credits of either ENS 490: *Internship* or ENS 491: *Practicum*. While it's not required for students earning the ENS minor, ENS 490 and ENS 491 are still available to minors and fulfill an upper-level elective.

An **internship** is usually completed under a supervisor's direction at an external organization. Refer to the [ENS Internship Guide](#) for more information. A **practicum**, on the other hand, involves proposing and completing an independent project under a faculty member's supervision. ENS 491: *Practicum* allows students to earn up to 6 credits for this activity. Each credit is equivalent to 50 hours of work on the project, including research, preparation, reporting, and other related academic activities, along with actual project service time.

**Practicum Requirements and Expectations**

Practicum projects may concern any area of ecological literacy and sustainability and will generally fall under areas such as sustainable food systems, energy and climate change, water quality, or cultural and the built environment. Proposals often build upon research that was initiated in a previous course in the Environmental and Sustainability Studies Program.

For guidance or questions related to ENS 491, contact the ENS Program Director, Dr. Amy McFarland, at [mcfarla1@gvsu.edu](mailto:mcfarla1@gvsu.edu) or (616) 331-8156.

**STEP 1: Connect with a faculty member about your practicum**

Confer with an ENS faculty member to discuss and develop your project idea. For majors, this could be your assigned ENS advisor, though it doesn't have to be. Confirm with the faculty member that they are willing and able to supervise your practicum.

Some examples of practicum projects are writing grant proposals, putting together professional dossiers, writing a business plan or a case study, developing a policy report or recommendation, planning an event (but not necessarily executing it), or conducting more in-depth reading and exploration in an area that fits with your future career goals or aspirations.

**STEP 2: Complete the online proposal form for ENS 491: *Practicum***

Students submit their proposal, also considered a contract, online through the [ENS 399/491 Proposal Form](#). The ENS Program requests that students aim to submit their proposal a minimum of 3 weeks prior to the date they intend to begin the practicum. On the form, you will be asked to provide:

1. A descriptive title
2. A summary of the proposed practicum project
3. A schedule of communication/meetings with the faculty supervisor
4. A list of proposed readings
5. Course requirements (exams, papers, reports, presentations, etc.)

### **STEP 3: Practicum approval; Register for ENS 491**

Once your proposal is submitted online, it will be forwarded to your faculty supervisor and to the ENS Program Director. The faculty supervisor and Program Director may offer feedback on suggested changes. If modifications to the practicum are requested, as determined by the faculty supervisor, the revised proposal should be forwarded to the ENS Office at [ens@gvsu.edu](mailto:ens@gvsu.edu).

Once approved, you will then submit a request in Banner for a registration permit to enroll in ENS 491. To initiate the registration permit request in Banner, follow these [Instructions for submitting registration permits](#). The section number of ENS 491 you register for should correlate with the number of credit hours you indicated on your ENS 491 Proposal Form. If your practicum is during the spring/summer semester, be sure to check the start and end dates of the ENS 491 section you're registering for to confirm that it aligns with your practicum plans (i.e. spring term/1st six weeks, summer term/2nd six weeks, or full 12 weeks). If you do not see a section number worth the appropriate number of credit hours you're pursuing, contact the [ENS Office](#), and a new section can be added to Banner.

### **STEP 4: Complete the practicum**

Your grade for the practicum will be based on the degree to which you complete your project, as evaluated by your faculty supervisor. For ENS 491, you will receive a grade of "credit" or "no credit," as opposed to a letter grade (A-F). Clear and consistent communication with your faculty supervisor is extremely important throughout the semester.

### **Programs and Funding to Support Research Projects**

The Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholarship (OURS) offers services and guidance to promote undergraduate research, such as the Undergraduate Research Fair in fall semester, and Student Scholars Day in winter semester. [Explore the Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholarship here](#). ENS students may be particularly interested in one of the [Sustainable Agriculture Place-Based Project Grants](#).