

STUDENT GUIDE FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION INTERNSHIPS PA 490 & 491

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THE INTERNSHIP COURSE

An internship gives you the opportunity to gain experience in a field setting related to your area of study. The internship is open to those seeking a career change or those without previous work experience in the public or nonprofit sectors. You must be an admitted Public Administration (PA) student, have completed relevant course requirements and have permission of the internship coordinator to enroll in an internship course.

Internships may be completed on a part-time or full-time basis. To obtain optimum benefit from the internship experience, the quality, intensity and quantity of field hours are important. Ideally, internships correspond to the academic calendar, but with the agreement of the student, site supervisor and academic coordinator, alternative starting and ending dates may be arranged if necessary to accommodate varying needs.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The requirements for three (3) credits include satisfactory completion of 150 hours of field work, weekly progress reports and a final paper. An internship checklist is required. You may earn six (6) credits if you complete 300 hours of field work.

The internship is graded Credit/No Credit

The minimum requirements to receive a grade of Credit include three things:

1. Submit an **Internship Checklist**. This is available from the Internship Coordinator.
2. Submit satisfactory **Weekly Progress Reports** at the rate of one report per week of field work. With each report include your name, the number of hours completed, the course you are registered for, your internship site and your **Internship Site Supervisor signature**.
3. Submit a satisfactory **Final Report** by the last day of class in the semester in which you expect to receive credit for the course. If the field work stretches over more than one semester, a **NO CREDIT** will be given and a grade change generated when both academic and field work is complete.

Note: Students who turn in written work with grammatical errors will be asked to re-do work before a grade of credit is assigned.

CONTENT OF THE PROGRESS REPORT AND FINAL PAPER

Weekly Progress Reports

Each progress report should highlight what you have been working on, who you have been interacting with, and what you have been learning during your internship. Your weekly progress report should be 1-2 pages, double spaced. You may email, mail or drop off your internship report to 228C DeVos Center (williamq@gvsu.edu). (You may also call the internship coordinator or stop by the office at any time to share your experiences.)

Final Paper

The paper should be 3-4 pages long. The content depends somewhat upon the nature of the internship. Discuss content with the internship coordinator, and perhaps with the site supervisor who may want to read the paper. At a minimum, it should include:

- 1) An overview of the field agency or site, its structure and functions, and where you fit within the organizational structure.
- 2) Critical thoughts of the field site's activities. This includes a discussion of the organization's efficiency, their staff structure, the organization's ability to perform its mission, the office environment and morale, and the pressing issues and advantages the organization faces, among other observations.
- 3) An Evaluation of the relationship between classroom and field knowledge; comment specifically on what you learned from your courses and your textbooks and whether this knowledge fits with the "real world" experience of the public and nonprofit agency. Refer to specific text/courses whenever possible.
- 4) A summary of your experience. What have you learned; how have you changed as a result of this experience? How does this experience affect the likelihood that you will continue pursuing a career in the public/nonprofit sector?

THE INTERN'S RESPONSIBILITIES AT THE FIELD SITE

- 1) As the internship is being arranged, discuss with the site supervisor what you will be doing. This is when you may fill in the Internship Checklist. It is a schedule of work times, activities and learning objectives. A copy is to be submitted to the internship coordinator.
- 2) Expect to be assigned meaningful work, whether the internship is "for pay" or a volunteer position. Especially if you are a volunteer, you should be allowed many opportunities to be an observer at staff meetings, client service conferences, etc. Try to avoid being taken advantage of with "busy" work and try to avoid being ignored. Ask questions; you may need to be fairly assertive and remind the field people that you are there to learn. The internship coordinator will gladly intercede for you if that is necessary. Performing secretarial work for the majority of your working hours is not acceptable.

- 3) Be courteous, responsible and reliable in your dealings with the field site and the supervisor. Irresponsibility will result in a negative evaluation from the supervisor and will affect future opportunities for your classmates and potential future professional positions for you. Show up on time, avoid unnecessary absences and schedule changes, and dress and behave in a professional manner.
- 4) Confer weekly with your site supervisor about your progress and performance. Reach a clear understanding about mutual expectations, schedules, activities, etc. When the internship is completed, write a note of appreciation to your supervisor.
- 5) In the event you need to resign prior to completion of the field work, discuss your resignation with your internship coordinator first, then with your site supervisor. **Notifying both in writing.** Please note that Internship Supervisors have the right to dismiss an intern for unsatisfactory work, which may result in students having to complete another 150 hours of fieldwork with another organization in order to receive credit.
- 6) Contact the Internship Coordinator **IMMEDIATELY** if a problem arises at the site or a situation develops which makes you feel uncomfortable call me at (616) 331-2362 or email me at williamq@gvsu.edu.