

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY CAREER CENTER

FACULTY INTERNSHIP GUIDE





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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this resource guide is to assist faculty supervisors in creating or enhancing internship initiatives within their departments/units. **Internships are a key component in helping students** apply the theoretical foundations they are learning in the classroom to real-work situations. Although Grand Valley does not have a university-wide internship policy, in this guide we offer guidelines on how to help you create a finely tuned internship program.

Whether your department/unit already has a highly functional internship program, or you are starting from scratch, this guide will be a helpful resource. Please **tailor the information provided** to fit your academic and departmental needs.

INTERNSHIP BASICS

An internship is defined as a **short-term**, usually semester-long, **opportunity for a student to gain valuable hands-on experience** in their field of study/interest. An internship has many invaluable benefits for students, while also **enriching academic programs** and **satisfying the needs of area employers**. Students are able to identify career fields that fit, as well as those that don't. They also gain **valuable employability skills** such as teamwork, problem-solving, and effective communication within the context of the workplace.

In addition, students are **meeting and networking with professionals** in their potential field, which significantly improves their chances of securing permanent employment upon graduation. **Finding employment is essential** for most, if not all, students — whether they plan to go on to graduate/professional school immediately after graduation or begin their careers. Without any tangible, career-related experience, their employability is drastically reduced. To stay competitive in today's job market, **internships are** no longer an option, but **a necessity**.

Basic Criteria

For a position to be considered an internship, the following criteria should be met (NACE, 2011):

- The experience must be an **extension of the classroom**: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
- The experience has a defined **beginning and end** (typically one semester in length or 15 weeks) and a job description with desired qualifications.
- There are clearly defined **learning objectives/goals** related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework.
- There is **supervision by a professional**, preferably with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of study.
- There is **routine feedback** provided by the supervisor and a formal evaluation conducted at the end of the experience.
- There are **resources, equipment, and facilities** provided by the employer that support learning objectives/goals.
- The experience does **not** take place in a **private home**.

PEOPLE INVOLVED

An effective **internship program involves a few key players:** the student intern, the internship site supervisor, the faculty internship coordinator, and the Grand Valley Career Center.

Student Intern

Student interns are responsible for searching for, applying to, and receiving the internship. This is great practice for when they graduate and are looking for full-time employment. It is the students' responsibility to **ensure** that their academic **department will approve the experience for academic credit**, as well as **submit all appropriate paperwork** by the appropriate deadlines.

Although students will be working for their interning organization, they also must remember they are **representing Grand Valley State University** and their academic departments. For this reason, all students should **act in a professional and ethical manner** and will be held to the provisions outlined in the Student Handbook (something the faculty internship coordinator may want to reiterate).

Internship Site Supervisor

The **site or field supervisor is responsible for overseeing the work of the student intern.** Ideally, this person will **serve as a mentor** to the student, offering helpful advice about the industry and ways to succeed in the field.

It is also important for this person to **have experience and knowledge in the area** in which the student is interning. For example, if an employer is looking for someone to create marketing logos, it's typically more meaningful for the student if the site supervisor has a graphic design or marketing background.

The site supervisor should also **provide feedback** on the intern's work throughout the duration of the internship. This can be done informally, but should consist of at least one written evaluation. We **recommend two evaluations** — one halfway through the internship and one at the end. The Career Center does send out requests for final employer and student evaluations for many campus departments/units through our Internship Management System (IMS). Additional information on IMS is provided on page five of this guide.

Faculty Internship Coordinator

The **faculty internship coordinator is responsible for helping the intern integrate the internship** into the total academic experience. It is important for the intern to meet with his or her faculty internship coordinator prior to starting the internship to make sure the internship will count for academic credit, which can only be approved by faculty members. This also will **help the student understand the assignments** required throughout the semester.

Faculty internship coordinators also can **serve as a helpful resource** in identifying possible internship sites and locations that would appropriately fit the student's academic and professional needs.

Throughout the semester, the faculty internship coordinator will **keep in contact with the intern** providing direction and support. It's also important for the coordinator to make contact with the site supervisor at least once during the internship. At the end of the semester, the coordinator will **evaluate the intern's learning** based on assignments, evaluations, and feedback from the site supervisor and submit the final grade.

Career Center

The Career Center is the **general resource** at Grand Valley for those involved with the internship process: students, employers, and faculty members. We have a staff of **professional advisors** available to assist students in preparation for finding and completing an internship. **Résumé assistance, interviewing advice, and internship search tips** are offered through one-on-one appointments and workshops throughout the school year.

Programming such as career fairs, field fairs, and panel presentations are also organized by the Career Center to allow students to **network with potential employers**. In addition, we are consistently meeting with employers to create more internship opportunities for students.

COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

One of the main goals of any internship is to **help students understand how lessons learned in class apply in a professional setting**. To help students make this connection, the ideal internship program consists of the following components:

Course Syllabus

Just like any other class, an **internship** class **should have a course syllabus**. This will help the student understand the **requirements of the internship** and gain an understanding of **what he or she should be learning** throughout the course of the internship.

Depending on the size of your program, a course syllabus might be reviewed individually between a student intern and a faculty internship coordinator or used in an internship seminar. See the Internship Seminar Class section on page four for more information.

Internship Agreement Forms/Contracts

To legitimize and formalize the internship arrangement between the student, employer, and university, it is important to have all parties **sign an internship agreement form**. Some departments have created their own paper forms; however, the Career Center offers an **online system** for overseeing this process **called the Internship Management System (IMS)**. The departments utilizing IMS have found it to be easier and more efficient than using a paper form. Additional information on IMS is provided on page five of this guide.

Learning Objectives

At the beginning of the student's internship, it is important to develop a **set of learning objectives**. This is best done by the student in collaboration with the site supervisor so the student can establish specific projects/ assignments that will help him or her achieve each objective. The faculty internship coordinator can then review the objectives and make suggestions as needed.

It is helpful for learning objectives to be **both academic and career-driven** as this will help the student begin to see and apply theoretical application and transferable skills (i.e., gain a better understanding of the societal effects of a community garden in the southwest area of Grand Rapids and develop public speaking skills).

Reflective Assignments

Reflective assignments help the student **connect work activity performed in the internship to theories and concepts learned in the classroom**. According to Bringle and Hatcher (1999), reflective activities should:

- **Clearly link** the internship experience to the learning objectives
- **Be structured** (outline description, expectations, and criteria for assessing)
- **Occur regularly** throughout the semester
- Have **consistent** faculty member **feedback**
- Include the **opportunity** for students to explore, clarify, and alter their values

Some examples may include bimonthly reflective journaling, a final reflective essay, a portfolio, employer/intern evaluation, presentation, etc.

Internship Seminar Class

Seminar classes are typically **small group meetings with other interning students**. They are **moderated by a faculty member** and can be weekly, bimonthly, or monthly. These seminars allow the students to **come together and share their experiences**. They **learn** from each other and **connect** their classroom learning to what they are seeing in their internships. The use of technology (blogging, Blackboard, Skype™, etc.) can be helpful for internships outside of Grand Valley's geographic area.

Evaluation and Assessment

As with any course, it is important to **evaluate and assess the effectiveness of your internship program**. For this reason, it is helpful to **establish goals** for your program each year. Examples may include increasing the number of students participating, establishing new internship placement sites, updating supplemental reading materials, etc. **Receiving feedback from both your students and employers** can help you consistently evaluate and improve your program.



AWARDING CREDIT

A student's **academic department determines whether or not to award academic credit** for an internship experience. Some programs have one person who oversees all internships in a particular major, while others have students work with their individual faculty advisors or faculty members who have expertise in students' internship area. Because **internships play such a valuable role in future employment**, we encourage faculty members to consider not only an internship's relevance to the academic content, but how it fits into each student's ultimate career goals.

Many students end up working in fields that indirectly relate to their major, and often it is the internship experience that has either guided this or helped the student acquire the necessary skills to be successful in a particular field. For these types of experiences, it is even more critical that students work with the internship site supervisor and faculty internship coordinator to **establish strong learning objectives**.

INTERNSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Internship Management System (IMS) is an **online tool** used by academic departments to easily **track** where their **students** are **completing for-credit internships**. Faculty internship coordinators are able to review student agreement forms, approve or deny potential experiences as credit-bearing, create reports on where their students are interning, communicate with internship site supervisors, manage student and supervisor evaluations, and more — all online.

This system creates more **efficiency and accuracy in managing student internships**. The complete process is outlined below.

1. The **student** completes and **submits** the online internship agreement form.
2. An email is sent to the student's **site supervisor to review and verify**. This provides the employer with the opportunity to ensure that what was discussed with the student is reflected in the agreement form.
3. After the form is verified by the supervisor giving his/her electronic signature, the faculty internship coordinator will receive an email indicating he/she has an **internship awaiting approval**.
4. The coordinator then will be able to **approve or deny the internship for credit**.
5. The **student** will receive an email message stating that the internship has been approved and instructing the student to **register for the class** in myBanner. You will still need to provide the student with a permit as the two systems do not communicate with each other.

In addition, two weeks prior to the end of the semester, IMS will **automatically send an evaluation** to the student and the site supervisor to complete. The coordinator will receive an email message stating that the evaluations have been submitted. The system will **store all evaluations electronically**. Like the agreement forms, the evaluations can be downloaded into an Excel file.

If you are interested in utilizing this helpful tool, please contact Rachel Becklin at becklira@gvsu.edu or (616) 331-3468.



LEGAL ISSUES

Paid vs. Unpaid Internships

It is important to note that a **student can get paid while still receiving academic credit for an internship**. In fact, we encourage paid internships. Legally, for-profit employers must pay their student interns at least minimum wage, unless the students are receiving academic credit. Nonprofit organizations are exempt and are not required to pay interns.

Please visit www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf for additional information.

Benefits

Because internships are often part-time and temporary, interns are **typically not afforded any medical or insurance benefits**. It is highly recommended for employers to cover their interns under workers' compensation; however, they are not legally obligated to do so.

Liability

In most cases, when a student is receiving academic credit for the internship, Grand Valley's **liability coverage extends to the student**, and typically the Career Center's online internship agreement is a sufficient contract between the student, employer, and university.

However, **some departments and employers have specific affiliation agreements** in place that outline the arrangement made by the employer and academic department (these are more typical for experiences in a clinical setting).

For questions about what is appropriate for your department, please visit www.gvsu.edu/uco/riskmanagement/.

A note about home-based opportunities: Some students may find opportunities to work out of the private home of an employer. GVSU highly discourages this for the safety of our students and to minimize liability to the university.

Faculty internship coordinators are advised to seek signatory authority from your dean. This ensures that you are signing off on internship agreements on behalf of the university and abdicates you from any personal liability.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How do I create an internship course for my academic program?

Please refer to pages 31–37 of the Faculty Handbook, which outline the process for proposing a new course. You can find the Faculty Handbook, as well as the online course change/proposal form, at www.gvsu.edu/facultygov/.

2. How many hours should a student work?

This varies by department, but typically 50 hours of work is the equivalent to one credit hour, so a student earning three credit hours will work 150 hours or 10–15 hours/week. It is important for the student to work with the employer to establish a set schedule and ensure both the employer's and the student's needs are being met.

3. What if an employer contacts me to make a student referral?

While it is okay to personally inform select students of a potential opportunity, to ensure you are adhering to the university's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) standards, it is also recommended you send the information to the Career Center to post.

Additional information: www.nacweb.org/legal/faculty_guide/.

4. What are some helpful resources to use when developing an internship program?

Start with your colleagues! There are some very well-developed internship programs overseen by your peers right here at Grand Valley.

A few examples:

- The Biology Department
www.gvsu.edu/biology/what-is-an-internship--139.htm
- The School of Communications
www.gvsu.edu/soc
- The School of Computing and Information Systems
www.cis.gvsu.edu/academics/internship

The following professional organizations provide great resources on their websites:

- The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS)
www.cas.edu/getpdf.cfm?PDF=E86CFB4D-0B9E-4853-6D82720BE0779895
- The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)
www.aacu.org/leap/hip.cfm
- The National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE)
www.nsee.org/standards-and-practice
- The National Association of College and Employers (NACE)
www.nacweb.org

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- NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers). (2011). A definition and criteria to assess opportunities and determine the implications for compensation. In *A position statement on U.S. internships*.
- O'Neil, N. (2010). Internships as a high-impact practice: Some reflections on quality. *Peer Review*, 12(4). Association of American Colleges & Universities.

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