



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
COMMUNICATION
internship program

SUPERVISOR PACKET

What is an internship?

An internship is a hands-on working and learning experience that is directly related to a student's field of study. An intern is supervised by a professional with expertise or experience in the professional field. Typically a semester long, internships should be outside of the classroom and may be paid with or without course credit or unpaid with course credit. Because interns are students, not degreed professionals, they should be guided and provided with constructive criticism. Supervisors play a critical role in making internships meaningful. Interns should not be considered unpaid employees who are doing the work or taking the place of a paid position. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent. However, interns are not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship.

Criteria for an experience to be defined as an internship:

- 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 be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
- The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.
- The experience has a defined beginning and end, 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 with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience.
- There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals.

What is NOT an internship?

While each of the following are valuable experiences both in practice and in building a student's resume, they should not be considered internships. These may be potential alternatives to internships:

- **Shadowing** is when a student visits a workplace and observes professional(s) working in his/her field. This is typically more passive than interning, limited in duration and number of hours, and does not involve the student taking on any tasks or responsibilities.
- **Working as a paid employee** in the workplace where the student hopes to work professionally, can give the student great opportunities to network and to gain exposure to the "real-world" workplace; however, if the student is not completing tasks that relate to his/her field of study, this would not be an internship. (For example, working as a receptionist for a PR firm or as a sales associate or cashier in a retail outlet.)

- **Working independently within the field of study but without the supervision of a professional** would be considered a part-time job, not an internship. In some instances, an advanced student may be equipped to take on such a role; however, without a supervisor who is equipped to direct and mentor the student by teaching and giving feedback on the

professional tasks, this would lack the learning component that an internship requires. (An example of this would be, a small organization that does not have a marketing or public relations office hiring a student to handle event planning or to manage the organization's social media accounts.)

Paid vs. Unpaid Internships

Students may do paid or unpaid internships when receiving course credit. If a student chooses to do an internship with a for-profit company without receiving course credit, the intern should be paid. There are some instances in which internships without course credit may be unpaid. Check the Department of Labor's guidelines on unpaid internships if you are unsure.

When deciding whether the internship should be paid or unpaid, you might consider:

1. Are we a "for-profit," private sector organization or a non-profit organization?
Non-profit organizations may hire unpaid interns in a volunteer capacity. Under the "Fair Labor Standards Act," for-profit organizations cannot benefit from the work of an individual without providing him/her with compensation. These positions should be paid or the intern should receive academic credit or both.
2. Can we guarantee that the intern will work 10-15 hours per week?
If yes, the student might take the internship course and receive academic credit. In this case, it may not be necessary to pay the intern. If fewer than 120 hours over the semester will be required, the intern will not be able to receive course credit, so the position should be paid. If the number of hours are limited and the student is passively observing rather than doing work for the organization, this would be considered job-shadowing.
3. Will the intern be supervised by a professional with expertise in the student's field of study who is capable of providing constructive feedback and oversight?
If the answer to this question is, "no," then the position is not considered an internship. The position should be a paid employee.
4. Do we plan to keep the intern for more than one semester?
Because students can only take CO 4053, the Internship in Communication course, once, an internship that lasts beyond one semester and is with a for-profit company should be paid.
5. Do we hope for the position to be competitive and to recruit top students to apply?
Paid internships are generally more desirable and more competitive than unpaid internships. Thus, they often attract top-tier students.

Guidelines as laid out by the Fair Labor Standards Act:

1. **Minimum wage**
The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour effective July 24, 2009. Many states also have minimum wage laws. In cases where an employee is subject to both state and federal minimum wage laws, the employee is entitled to the higher minimum wage.
2. **Overtime**
Covered nonexempt employees must receive overtime pay for hours worked over 40 per workweek (any fixed and regularly recurring period of 168 hours — seven consecutive 24-hour periods) at a rate not less than one and one-half times the regular rate of pay. There is no limit on the number of hours employees 16 years or older may work in any workweek. The FLSA does not require overtime pay for work on weekends, holidays, or regular days of rest, unless overtime is worked on such days.
3. **Hours worked**
Hours worked ordinarily include all the time during which an employee is required to be on the employer's premises, on duty, or at a prescribed workplace.
4. **Recordkeeping**
Employers must display an official poster outlining the requirements of the FLSA. Employers must also keep employee time and pay records.
5. **Child labor**

These provisions are designed to protect the educational opportunities of minors and prohibit their employment in jobs and under conditions detrimental to their health or well-being.

For more information and to see full guidelines please visit, <https://www.dol.gov/whd/flsa/index.htm>

Expectations of Supervisors

Supervisors should:

- Have a written position description and conduct a meaningful interview prior to hiring. The hiring process will set the tone for the internship. If it doesn't appear to be a selective process, the intern may take the position less seriously.
- Provide meaningful work opportunities and tasks for the intern to complete that directly relate to his/her field of study. The work should not be simply clerical work or busy work but should provide opportunities to practice and develop skills that he/she has learned in the classroom and will use in the future.
- Complete the necessary e-forms for the student to receive academic credit: a supervisor agreement form at the beginning and end of term evaluation.
- Ensure that the agreed upon number of hours are being made available for the intern to receive course credit. (This is approximately 10 hours per week, depending on start/end dates, with a total of 120 hours over the course of the semester.)
- Provide any necessary resources that the intern is expected to use to complete tasks. The intern should not be expected to purchase software or materials to complete work for the organization. These should be provided by the organization.
- Set clear expectations for the intern by discussing goals, objectives, schedules, and tasks that will be completed. Unclear expectations are perhaps the biggest complaint interns have.
- Conduct regular meetings with the intern to provide feedback on his/her work and provide general professional development and mentoring.
- Treat the intern with professionalism and respect and ensure that at least 80% of the internship duties are pre-professional, not clerical.
- Involve the student, as much as possible, in everyday activities/meetings of the organization.
- Aid the student in networking with other professionals in the field whenever possible.

Frequently Asked Questions

How can the supervisor get the word out to MSU Department of Communication students about the internship position?

- Email the position description to the Internship coordinator (intern@comm.msstate.edu) so it can be posted on social media and the Communication Department Internship Program website.
- Register with the MSU Career Center database, Connections. Students frequently access this resource for job and internship postings. To register, visit the "Employer" section of the Career Center website: <http://www.career.msstate.edu/>.

How do students receive academic credit for internships?

- Students majoring in communication at Mississippi State University may receive academic credit for internships in one of two ways. Option 1 is more beneficial to the student but dependent on the student and internship:
 - CO 4053 – Internship in Communication
 - This course is considered an upper-division communication course and will count toward the student's degree. In addition to working 120+ hours at the internship location and being evaluated by the supervisor, the student completes academic work and is graded by the course instructor. This option requires regular tuition and fees and may be taken with a paid or unpaid internship. To take the class, a student must:
 - be a Communication major
 - be a junior or senior

- have a minimum 2.8 GPA
- have completed the introductory course(s) in his/her concentration area
- Career Center – PPI Course
 - The MSU Career Center offers a Professional Practice Internship (PPI) course. This course provides three hours of non-additive credit, meaning that the hours do not count toward the student's degree. In order to take this course, the intern is required to work 30-40 hours per week at the internship site.
- If a student does not meet the requirements for either of these courses, he/she may not be eligible to receive academic credit for the internship. If the internship is with a for-profit organization, it should be paid.

What paperwork is the supervisor responsible for filling out?

- If a student is receiving course credit for the internship, the supervisor will need to fill out two e-forms.
 - At the beginning of the internship, he or she must fill out a supervisor agreement form.
 - At the end of the internship, the supervisor will be asked to complete an evaluation of the intern. These forms will be emailed and submitted electronically.
- If the student is not receiving course credit, the internship is not officially documented by the university and no paperwork is required.

What does a typical internship schedule look like?

- Interns should work with their supervisor to develop a mutually beneficial schedule.
- Most interns will work between 10-15 hours per week while taking other courses; however, some interns will work fulltime (30-40 hours per week) for the duration of the semester.
- Hours should be discussed prior to hiring so that the student and supervisor are on the same page with what to expect.

When should we begin looking for interns?

- Summer is the most popular time that students seek internships. However, fall and spring internships, especially those that are local, are often quite desirable to students who want a longer internship experience that they can do part-time while still taking classes.

<i>Internship Semester</i>	<i>When Students Begin Looking for Internships (Advising Period)</i>
Fall	Eager students: Late March, early April. Others may wait toward the end of July.
Spring	Late October
Summer	Late March, early April

Is the intern allowed to rotate between departments?

- Some organizations value the intern rotating to each department to gain a more comprehensive knowledge of the company. If the intern will rotate between departments, it is suggested they rotate in 2-3 week periods.

What if the intern is not a good fit?

- First, schedule a meeting with the intern to discuss any concerns. Major problems can be avoided by first setting clear expectations for the internship during the hiring process and then by holding periodic meetings to openly provide feedback and constructive criticism. It is much harder to correct problems if the intern feels taken off-guard by the feedback or expectations.
- If there is no improvement after counseling with the intern, contact the **Communication Department Internship Coordinator, Amy Fountain, at afountain@comm.msstate.edu or 662-325-8938.**

