GRADUATE STUDENT INTERNSHIP HANDBOOK

Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration
College of Education and Human Services
Western Illinois University
Macomb, IL  61455
The Professional Internship is an advanced culminating experience taken after your graduate course has been successfully completed. It is typically a three (3) to six (6) month experience approved by your Graduate Advisory Committee. The length of the experience will be based upon your needs and the opinion of members of your Graduate Advisory Committee.

The internship should provide you with a supportive, structured learning environment for acquiring practical on-the-job training. You will be able to synthesize material from your coursework, apply theories and techniques in your area of interest, and begin to develop a personal and professional style of relating to participants, agency staff personnel, and other professionals.

The purpose of the experience is to provide you a structured, supportive, practical learning experience in which you are able to blend previous knowledge with a developing personal and professional style into working in a human service agency. The goals of this experience are to enable you to achieve the following:

1. Understand the social, administrative, managerial, and program dynamics of a leisure service agency;

2. Become professionally involved in the programming, management and administration of a leisure service agency;

3. Understand and experience the roles and responsibilities associated with an advanced professional managerial position, and

4. Build your personal and professional skills while being actively engaged in an agency’s operations.

Getting Started

Your Interests and Goals

You may have already seriously reflected on your competencies and goals and have a fairly good idea of the types of people you enjoy working with and the type of agency or program (natural resources, conservation, park management, recreation programming, therapeutic recreation, adventure, tourism, etc.) in which you would like to work. Knowledge about yourself and your preferences gives you some direction for determining an internship experience. Keep in mind that you can use the internship experience as an opportunity to expand your skills in an already familiar area, enlarge your scope of experience, broaden your area of expertise, and deepen your self-awareness.
As you consider your career objectives, keep in mind that there are many types of leisure and human service agencies with different missions and goals. In the beginning of the selection process consider these factors:

1. the kind of setting that would satisfy your needs (e.g., natural/outdoor, community, commercial, tourism, health care, youth services, etc.)

2. the types of people with whom you prefer working (e.g., children, youth, adults, seniors, special needs, etc.)

3. the kinds of responsibilities you prefer (e.g., programming and leadership, management, administration, etc.);

4. the environment in which you would like to work (e.g., fast paced and high pressured, highly structured and controlled, large staff with specific responsibilities, few staff with generalist skills, large or small group leadership, etc.).

While the internship experience requires that direct supervision be provided, you should carefully consider the personal and professional qualities of the supervision which best match your responsibilities and personal style. Your supervisor must have the interest, time commitment, and understanding of the nature of the supervisory and educational relationship. Consider the agency’s operational and program schedules; evening and weekend schedules are frequently planned in many agencies. Another aspect of your internship involves financial considerations. While many agencies are unable to pay for your services, some may offer compensation of one type or another (e.g., hourly wage, board, meals, parking, housing, etc.), but the number of these agencies will be limited. In instances where some compensation is offered, you must ensure that the learning outcomes associated with the internship are not compromised.

Agency and Goals

An integral part of the internship experience is understanding the agency. Agencies, regardless of their missions, programs, or services, are committed to protecting and enhancing the environment and/or the personal well-being of their participants. Although you will seek guidance from your Graduate Advisory Committee members, you will investigate several agencies (approximately three or more different agencies) to determine the most appropriate setting for meeting your goals. Understanding the agency is critical in order to be successful in completing your responsibilities, learning and applying techniques, and working cooperatively with others. Since many agencies function differently, you should explore the following variables to help you make an informed decision:

**Type**  --------------------- many organizations are categorized as nonprofit (voluntary), public (governmental), or profit (commercial/private), about which you need to become familiar.
Identity ---------------- every agency has its history, territory, programs, policies, rules, procedures, and vocabulary with which to become familiar.

Purpose and goals ---- every agency has a mission and purpose for operation and goals to carry them out that you should come to know and understand.

Advocates ------------- every agency has people within the community who support its purpose and goals as well as those who do not, about which you need to become knowledgeable.

Structure ------------- every agency has an organizational structure with which policies and procedures are developed and implemented.

Communications ------ every agency has unique processes (formal and informal) used to transmit information among and between staff that needs to be understood.

Goals

After having assessed and seriously considered your career objectives and potential agency programs and services, you must formulate a list of specific goals, or learning outcomes, that will guide your involvements and responsibilities within an agency. These should be based upon your strengths and weaknesses relative to the entry level career expectations as summarized in job descriptions. These must be formally written and reviewed before being approved by your Graduate Advisory Committee.

Interview

To assist you in making an informed decision, you should request an interview with the appropriate agency staff person(s). During this process you should explore the above responsibilities/expectations, degree of supervision, work space/location, information technology resources (e.g., computers, e-mail, etc.), and other dynamics (e.g., special projects) of the experience. It should be noted that many agencies will shape the experience around your expressed needs.

In preparing for the interview you should familiarize yourself with all of the requirements of the Department’s internship experience. You should also have an up-to-date resume outlining your education, professional, and volunteer experiences relevant to your area of professional interest. In addition to this, you may wish to include copies of relevant written work (e.g., program plans, samples of simulated budgets, etc.), internship regulations, and internship evaluation procedures.

During the interview you should be prepared to clearly articulate your learning outcomes and ask and answer relevant questions. The professional at the agency may ask questions to learn more about your personality and abilities. A wide variety of questions related to your prior
experiences, skills, goals and professional expectations may be asked. As an intern, your attitude, honesty, your style of relating to the interviewer, as well as those of the interviewer, are important ingredients to consider.

**Selecting the Agency**

After completing interviews with multiple agencies, your observations and reactions should be discussed with your Graduate Advisory Committee. The specific learning outcomes and goals you wish to accomplish at the agency should be reviewed.

After obtaining your Committee’s approval, you must make formal arrangements with the agency personnel; a letter of agreement which confirms the placement will be requested from the agency. This letter must be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator prior to starting the internship. Your specific responsibilities, supervisor’s responsibilities (e.g., including the submission of the midterm and final evaluation report), and dates of the experience will be detailed in the letter (see Appendix).

You are expected to function as a staff member in the organization and keep at least as many hours per week as the professionals in the office of the agency. The work must be considered full time and at the highest professional level of contribution and involvement the employer is able to allow.

Bi-weekly reports and a major agency assignment or project are expected. The bi-weekly reports are to be professional written narrative summaries of the responsibilities you hold and the accomplishments you attained and include the following:

1. Reflection upon the personal/professional meanings and outcomes of these experiences and

2. Description of how your graduate coursework is related to your internship tasks, responsibilities, and professional development.

The reports may be submitted in hardcopy or through electronic sources including e-mail and fax. In the event you submit your reports electronically, you must meet the preference, style and method required by your faculty internship supervisor.

In consultation with your agency supervisor, a major assignment or project will be identified, planned, conducted and evaluated. Such tasks might include a special marketing/promotional project, comprehensive needs assessment, a qualitative research project, or other project that exemplifies the high-level skills expected of advanced responsibilities.
International Internship

All international students must have advanced permission from the Office of International Student Affairs to enroll in the internship. (Please obtain a copy of the relevant regulations in the Office of International Student Affairs.) You must submit the form and a letter of recommendation from the Academic Advisor as well as student copies of the I-20/IAP-66 forms to the Office of International Student Affairs in order to review written approval of the internship. International students are encouraged to seek internship opportunities as early as possible in order to avoid any potential delays.

University Supervision

The Chair of your Graduate Advisory Committee will customarily serve as your faculty supervisor for the professional internship. In lieu of this, a member of your Graduate Advisory Committee, or the Graduate Coordinator, will serve in this capacity. You, the agency supervisor, and the faculty supervisor are encouraged to communicate regularly.

Internship Evaluation

The agency supervisor will submit a mid-term and final evaluation, which is to include an overall grade of your performance. The agency supervisor can employ an appropriate agency evaluation instrument/tool/form which he or she currently uses to evaluate personnel. A recommendation for a final grade, using the following guidelines, is to be submitted to the faculty supervisor using the agency’s evaluation process or the formal instrument found in the Appendix.

A = Superior/excellent performance in all aspects of the internship experience. Indicative of an intern who would be hired immediately for an available position in your organization.

B = Above average performance and regularly exceeded minimum requirements of the internship experience. Indicative of an intern who would be highly considered for an available position in your organization.

C = Average performance of one who generally carried out the majority of requirements expected of the internship experience. Indicative of an intern who holds some promise for success in your organization. (It should be noted that average or below average performance will contribute significantly to dismissal from the graduate program.)

D = Below average performance of one whose work was generally of very poor quality. Indicative of an intern who would not be an acceptable staff person in your organization.
Inadequate and very poor performance of work generally required of the internship experience. Indicative of a person who holds little or no potential for success in your organization.

Completion of the Internship

After having submitted all of the bi-weekly reports, completed a special project(s), midterm and final evaluations, you are required to arrange with your Graduate Advisory Committee an exit meeting to review the process, expectations, responsibilities, and outcomes of your internship experience. Having completed these tasks successfully, and in a timely manner, your faculty supervisor will be able to determine and submit your final grade.
RPTA GRADUATE INTERNSHIP APPROVAL FORM

Intern’s Name _________________________________ I.D. # ____________________________

Intern’s Address during Internship ________________________________________________

Intern’s Home Phone # ______________________________  Work # ____________________

Agency’s Name
________________________________________________________________

Agency’s Address
______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

Agency’s Phone # _______________________________ Supervisor’s ______________________

Agency Supervisor’s Name ______________________________ Title ____________________

If applicable – NCTRC Certification # __________________ Date ________________

Date Letter of Agreement Received ____________________________

Approved by Advisory Committee Chair ____________________________

Approved by Advisory Committee Member ____________________________

Approved by Advisory Committee Member ____________________________

________________________________________________________________

Office use only

Intern’s Faculty Supervisor __________________________________________

Date Goals given to Faculty Supervisor ________________________________

Faculty Supervisor’s Grade Recommendation ____________________________

STUDENT EVALUATION OF THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE
(MID-TERM AND FINAL)
Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration
Western Illinois University
STUDENT: __________________________________________________

INTERNSHIP PERIOD IS FROM _____________ TO _______________

AGENCY: __________________________________________________

AGENCY SUPERVISOR’S NAME: ________________________________

1. Briefly summarize to date your experience with respect to helping you meet your goals, learning outcomes.

2. Reflect on the personal and professional meaning of these experiences.

3. Relate your experiences to the professional principles, practices and /or processes acquired from your graduate coursework.

4. Is the agency supervision you are getting adequate? Explain.

5. Is the department supervision you are receiving adequate? Explain.

6. How can this internship experience become more meaningful?
   a. What can you do to make it so.
   b. What can the agency do to make it so?

7. What experience would you like to see given more emphasis during your internship?

Student Signature: _______________________________ Date: _____________

Faculty Advisor Signature: _______________________________ Date: _____________
Please supplement the following ratings with a statement covering any additional points. Make note of abilities or characteristics that will particularly qualify, or problems that will affect, the student for work in leisure services. A supplement on your agency letterhead is suggested.

## I. PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES
- Establishes work goals and objectives
- Displays basic understanding and knowledge of leisure services
- Possesses the ability to think independently and appropriately
- Displays initiative and imagination
- Is able to apply knowledge in a practical way
- Has displayed growth in knowledge and basic understanding
- Strives for quality in own performance

Recommended grade in PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES A__B__C__D__F__

## II. PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE AND LEADERSHIP
- Is successful in achieving goals and objectives
- Is able to organize people and resources
- Capable of motivating others
- Uses all available resources
- Is able to lead and direct
- Completes assignments on or before due date
- Is punctual for meetings, appointments and deadlines
- Has shown an increase in skills in all areas

Recommended grade in PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE & LEADERSHIP A__B__C__D__F__

## III. PROFESSIONAL PERSONALITY AND ATTITUDE
- Shows enthusiasm for work
- Exhibits pleasant and tasteful personal appearance
- Displays a sense of humor at appropriate times
- Displays mature judgement
- Accepts assignments willingly
- Actively seeks and is alert to potential learning situations
- Is willing to work to improve areas of weakness
- Projects a positive and supportive attitude toward other staff members

Recommended grade in PROFESSIONAL PERSONALITY AND ATTITUDE A__B__C__D__F__

## IV. COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS
- Is able to communicate ideas orally and in writing
- Strives for quality in oral and written expression
- Is courteous and tactful
- Accepts suggestions and criticism
- Displays concern for others
- Is consistent and fair in professional relationships
- Confronts problem areas in a positive, constructive manner

Recommended grade in COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS A__B__C__D__F__

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SIGNED ________________________________ DATE ________________________________

(AGENCY SUPERVISOR)

SIGNED ________________________________ DATE ________________________________

(STUDENT)

Key: 0 = Not Applicable, 1 = Rarely, 2 = Usually, 3 = Frequently, 4 = Always