



# Internship FAQs

## 1. I was told I needed to complete a “practicum” What is a practicum, exactly?

“Practicum” is another word for an internship. During an internship, the student obtains temporary work with an outside business or organization to earn college credit for the learning experience. Students can also work within some departments on campus – providing the available position is relevant to their major field of study, of course.

## 2. Why do I have to do an internship?

The internship provides valuable hands-on experience that no other college course can provide. The internship gives students the chance to apply the knowledge they gained in class to the real-world environment, while connecting with and learning from professionals in their chosen field. You can even add it to your resume!

## 3. What is a senior project?

A senior project is a research project undertaken by some Arts and Sciences majors in their junior or senior year. The senior project can take many forms, but students most often prepare a portfolio, paper, or webpage to present the final research findings.

Not all Arts and Sciences students have the option of doing a Senior Project. If you are interested in doing a Senior Project instead of internship, please check with Career Services prior to beginning any paperwork to make sure you have the option.

## 4. How do I register for my internship/senior project?

Before an internship or senior project registration form can be issued, the student must first submit a course proposal and Letter of Intent (if working a internship) to the Career Services office. The proposal describes, in narrative format, the internship experience or senior project. For internship students, the Letter of Acceptance comes directly from the business or organization where the student will be working; the letter should state that the student has been accepted for an internship or internship position with the company and list some of the job duties the student will be performing. The letter must be on the company or organization’s letterhead and be signed by the student’s supervisor. This letter is not necessary for students who are working on campus. While an internship proposal is generally three to four pages in length, a good senior project proposal can be twice that or more!

Please be advised International students cannot work off campus at any U.S. business or organization without an Affiliation Agreement between the business/organization and Mountain State University. These agreements can take months to negotiate. It is strongly recommended that International Students inquire about their internship requirements at least one (1) semester in advance. Exceptions cannot be made for this requirement – it is the law.

## 5. You mean I have to write a paper before I can register? WHY?

The internship and senior project experiences are not like any other college course – there are no standard syllabi, no class meetings, and no exams. Each student’s internship or senior project is a unique experience, and job duties/responsibilities will differ even when students are working at the same internship site! In order for proper academic oversight of the internship or senior project, there must be documentation. In other words, you have to explain the details, in writing, to your faculty mentor. The proposal must be read and signed by the student’s faculty



mentor, the Dean or Division Chair of the appropriate school (Arts & Sciences or School of Business), the student, and the Career Services Center; students doing an internship must also obtain the signature of their site supervisor, and all international students must first obtain the signature of the PDSO on campus, as well. Approval from International Student Services is required.

In the case of Culinary Arts students, a new Course Proposal and Letter of Acceptance must be submitted for each of the courses, even if he or she is continuing to work at the same site. A student's goals and objectives will change as they move up through the internship levels. The internship series is designed to allow students to gain a wide variety of culinary experience, so it is strongly encouraged that students seek out a new site for each internship when possible.

Examples of Course Proposals for Senior Project and Internship, as well as a sample Letter of Acceptance, are available online at [www.careerservices.mountainstate.edu](http://www.careerservices.mountainstate.edu).

**6. Cougar Web won't let me register for my internship/senior project. Help!**

Students cannot register for internship or senior project online. Internship and senior project registration requires a special registration form, signed by Career Services. Students will not be issued this form until all other pertinent paperwork is turned in to Career Services.

**7. My degree requires fifteen credit hours of internship to graduate, but I can't afford to register for all of it at once. What can I do?**

Students can register for internship or senior project in increments. For example, a student who needs fifteen hours of internship, but cannot afford to pay for all of them at once, may register for six (6) credit hours in Fall semester, and nine (9) the following Spring.

Please note, however, that each time a registration form is issued, the student must submit a Course Proposal and Letter of Acceptance.

**8. I need to register now, but I can't start working until summer. Is that okay?**

If you need to register for one semester, but put off starting your hours, please inform the Career Services Center of your circumstances when you turn in your paperwork. In addition, it is very important that you list the semester you wish to be registered for on your Course Proposal, and not the semester/semesters you plan to complete your hours in. For example:

CORRECT:	INCORRECT:
Semester: Fall 2007	Semester: Fall/Spring/Summer 2007

If you have mistakenly listed the wrong semester on your Course Proposal, you will be asked by Career Services to mark out the incorrect semester, write in the new one, and initial it.



## 9. Can my regular job count as my internship site?

That depends. Is your job relevant to your major field of study? A forensic investigation major will not be allowed to count the hours they work bartending, for example. Assuming your regular job is related to your major field of study, the faculty mentor will usually allow it, if the student takes on more and different responsibilities for the duration of the internship.

However, students are not allowed to “backlog” hours worked prior to internship registration. See below.

## 10. I’m a Paralegal Studies major who’s worked as a legal assistant/paralegal at a law firm for five years. Can I count that as an internship?

No. This has to do with validity, as well. In order for a student to earn internship credit for hours worked, there must be academic oversight by a qualified faculty mentor and documentation of the internship experience.

## 11. What does the faculty mentor do? How do I find mine?

The faculty mentor provides the academic oversight that is so crucial to the success of any internship or senior project. The faculty mentor provides guidance and mentoring to the student during the process, and may also aid in choosing an appropriate internship site or research topic for a senior project. In addition, it is the faculty mentor who grades the internship term paper or senior project.

Who your faculty mentor is depends on your major field of study. For example, Ann Nagye serves as mentor for business students, Andrew Wheeler for forensics students, and so on. In the case of Liberal Studies (LS or IDS majors), the mentor is a qualified faculty member from their concentration. For example, LS/Biology majors would speak with Dave Hurt. It is very important to speak with your faculty prior to completing any other paperwork.

Please feel free to contact Career Services Center to verify your faculty mentor, and if other professors may be available.

## 12. How many hours do I have to work to complete my internship?

Forty (40) clock hours equal one (1) credit hour. A student registered for fifteen (15) hours of internship must complete six hundred (600) clock hours.

## 13. That’s a lot! How long do I have to complete the hours?

Most students have one (1) calendar year to complete their internship hours and turn in any assignments to their faculty mentor. For example, if you register for your internship on March 1, 2008, you have until March 1, 2009 to complete your hours, turn in your signed hour’s logs, and submit your term paper to your faculty mentor.

However, because Culinary Arts internships are only three (3) to six (6) credit hours, students are given one semester (or 3 months) from the date of registration to complete their internship hours and turn assignments. It is strongly suggested that students speak to Chef Bailey to find out their completion date.



#### **14. But I have to register for this semester and today is the last day of registration!**

You can register for internship or senior project credits at any time until the end of the semester. There is no closing date for internship or senior project each semester. However, please do be aware of any financial aid or VISA deadlines that apply – contact the financial aid department if you have any concerns regarding your grants, loans, or scholarships. International students should contact the International Student Services office well before the start of the semester to find out if they have any deadlines looming.

#### **15. How do I find an internship site?**

Finding an internship site involves the same “leg work” as searching for a job. You can check out Career Service’s on Cougar Web— we have a section devoted solely to internship opportunities. Call local businesses and organizations for internship positions relevant to your major field of study and politely ask if they’re currently accepting interns.

It helps to “think outside the box” when searching for an internship site – you may be surprised at the wide variety of organizations that can help you achieve your internship objectives. For example, most companies and non-profit organizations employ in-house accounting or legal services professionals, even if accounting or law isn’t their main field, insurance companies sometimes hire forensics students to help with accident investigations, and public schools sometimes allow psychology students to work with their school counselors.

Career Services offers resume help and interview coaching as well. Visit Cougar Web for resume help, job search tips, and links to useful articles. If you need more help, please contact our office to schedule an appointment.

Just remember, it doesn’t have to be a “formal” internship program to qualify. Any job that is relevant to your major field of study can work – just make sure you check with Career Services and your faculty mentor prior to committing.

#### **16. Do internship positions pay well?**

An internship position may not pay at all; the student is working solely to earn college credit. However, some companies do offer paid internship/internship positions. If you are lucky enough to get one of these, that’s perfectly fine!

#### **17. What do I have to do to complete my internship and get my grade?**

Besides actually working the hours, the students must submit to the faculty mentor hour’s logs signed by their supervisor. Career Services provides a Daily Journal and Hours Log sheet when you register that allows you to log your hours and take notes on the day’s job duties, for your convenience. In addition, most faculty mentors require that the students write a term paper about their experience during the internship. Requirements for this paper are set by each individual faculty mentor, and not by Career Services. It is best to go over the requirements for the final paper with your faculty mentor before you begin logging hours.

It is strongly recommended that students submit their internship term paper and hour’s logs directly to their faculty mentor for grading. Career Services is unable to keep copies of these documents, and will not be able to reissue any work misdirected via campus mail. Students are also urged to make extra copies of their term papers and hours log sheets in the event that items do become lost in the mail.

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The student's site supervisor will be asked to submit a Performance Appraisal form to Career Services, as well. This form allows the supervisor to rate your performance on the job. Career Services forwards this form on to your faculty mentor to be considered in determining your grade, and keeps a copy of the Appraisal on file.

\*For Culinary Arts: Students are required to compile and submit to Chef Bailey a portfolio of all internship experiences at the end of their last practicum course. Students are strongly encouraged to speak with Chef Bailey well before the start of Practicum 1 to find out what materials are required for the portfolio.

### 18. Why don't I have a grade yet?

Your faculty mentor will enter your grade once all internship or senior project materials have been received by their office. If you have sent in your hours logs and term paper and your site supervisor has mailed in the Performance Appraisal, or if you have sent in your senior project materials, make sure they have been received by your faculty mentor. Always make extra copies of your term paper and hours log sheets, in case a mistake occurs in the mail.

Please note that, after a grade has been entered, it could take several days for it to show up on your Cougar Web account. If you are concerned that a grade has not been posted, please contact your faculty mentor first to ensure that he or she has indeed received all assignments and paperwork.

### 19. I have a really weird question/problem that's not covered here. Now what?

Contact Michael Pauley, Career Services Coordinator. Our office is located in the Student Life House, second floor, and is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday (closing for lunch between 12:00 n and 1:00 p.m. every day). Her direct telephone is (304) 929-1565, or call 1(800) 766-6067 and ask for extension 1565. Michael is also available via email at [mpauley@mountainstate.edu](mailto:mpauley@mountainstate.edu).

If work commitments prevent you from stopping by during regular office hours, please call ahead to arrange an appointment!

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