

# Internship Manual

This manual is designed to provide an overview of the internship experience in the School of Recreation Health and Tourism (SRHT). The following sections outline the purpose, requirements and responsibilities of all parties involved with the internship experience.

## 1. Purpose, Objectives and Definitions

The internship is a general education synthesis course providing students practical opportunities to apply what has been learned during their undergraduate career. This capstone course also meets major requirements in their specified concentration area. Students in SRHT are required to complete an internship before they graduate. The SRHT internship is a 12-credit hour semester-long course in the following BS degree programs:

- BS HFRR Health Promotion (HEAL 490),
- BS HFRR Kinesiology (KINE 490),
- BS HFRR Parks and Outdoor Recreation (PRLS 490),
- BS HFRR Sport Management (SPMT 490),
- BS HFRR Therapeutic Recreation (PRLS 490), and
- BS Tourism and Events Management (TOUR 490).

Students are expected to register for the internship after the completion of all of their classroom work.

The internship is a structured and supervised, work experience that may be paid or voluntary and takes place at a variety of public, private, semi-private or commercial agencies. The internship is a three-way partnership agreement among Mason, an approved site, and the intern.

During the internship, the student receives professional preparation coordinated by a faculty supervisor in addition to direction from a qualified site supervisor. The internship provides industry specific opportunities for student participation, organization and administration.

The following terms describe the parties involved in the internship experience and are used throughout this manual:

- *Student Intern* is the student registered for the synthesis course and completing the assignments required.
- *Internship Coordinator* is a Mason faculty member that prepares the student for the internship experience. This person also communicates with various sites seeking Mason student interns. This internship coordinator may also monitor student intern's progress during the internship or coordinate other faculty members that monitor student intern's progress.
- *Faculty supervisor* is a Mason faculty member designated as the instructor of record for the internship course. This person is responsible for remotely monitoring student progress during the internship, conducting a site visit and submitting the final grade.
- *Site supervisor* is the individual at the internship location responsible for monitoring and supervising the student intern throughout the program. This person may offer advice, instruction and supervision typical of that provided for a young professional in the industry. This

person will also assess student intern competencies at the mid-point and conclusion of the experience that will inform the final grade.

## 2. Benefits

Student interns benefit from the internship experience by having the opportunity to synthesize their classroom knowledge into real world experiences. This experiential learning allows the student to be better prepared and more marketable for the current job market demands. They have support from their internship coordinator, faculty and site supervisors to learn how to negotiate the challenges faced by young professionals. This experience affords students the opportunity to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and assess their future employment aspirations.

SRHT faculty recognizes the benefits of an academically sound internship program, which includes the provision and utilization of feedback from the site supervisor and the student intern in the continuing evaluation of the SRHT curriculum. The program aims to produce well prepared students by integrating the theoretical and practical experiences of their given industry.

Sites that provide internship opportunities benefit from the partnership with Mason to develop our future professionals. These student interns can integrate with professional staff to promote the overall learning experience as student interns bring a different set of skills, knowledge base, and perspective to the job. It also provides site personnel the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of their in-house training programs or other services based on feedback from student interns. Finally the internship affords an opportunity to screen for prospective employees. Student interns become familiar with an organization's culture and work, and establish close working relationships with current employees. This makes them ideal candidates for job vacancies.

## 3. Expectations of Internship Program Experience

Students should examine the internship course syllabus for their degree program for specific requirements specified by their concentration area. In general, each student intern is required to work full-time at an approved internship site averaging 30-40 hours weekly for a minimum of 400 total hours (560 for TR) of professional practice over a period of 10 to 15 weeks in a given semester. By the end of their internship experience students should have a better understanding and appreciation of the role, duties, and responsibilities of a professional in their chosen field.

The student intern is expected to assume a wide range of responsibilities:

- **Participation** – A student intern should be given the opportunity to observe the intricacies of the internal and external working relationships of the site. In addition, student interns should be allowed to participate in site committee meetings, conferences, and workshops to gain a better understanding of their chosen concentration.
- **Organization** – The student intern should participate in any appropriate experiences relevant to the site; such as organizing events, evaluation of programs, and analysis of data. The site supervisor is encouraged to assign the student intern an active leadership role in special projects. Usually, the student intern observes and assists until he or she is acquainted with the staff, clientele, policies and procedures, organizational patterns, facilities and equipment, and

rules and regulations. The student intern should gradually assume increasing responsibility and eventually be solely responsible for her/his own special project.

- **Administration** – The site should provide the student intern with practical experience employing routine administrative skills, techniques and practices. Student interns should gain experience in a variety of site operations (e.g., accounting and record-keeping, event management, facility operation, maintenance procedures, planning, program development, public relations, research, marketing, risk management, and human resources) as appropriate.

## 4. Student Eligibility

To register for the internship course, students must have senior status (90 credits) and meet all the pre-requisites specified in their area of concentration. These pre-requisites are listed on Patriot web. All prospective student interns should review this internship manual and refer to the checklist of student intern responsibilities (Appx.1). This form is provided to help student interns organize the course requirements associated with the internship experience.

It is recommended that students schedule the internship experience as the last course of their academic program. This ensures eligibility and qualifies this course as a synthesis experience. Prospective student interns must confirm their eligibility by completing the *Eligibility Form* (Appx. 2), which requires approval from the internship coordinator. Because the internship is a controlled course students may not register until this initial paperwork has been completed.

Since the student intern will be working full-time at the approved internship site, he or she will be limited to taking no more than one 3-credit course concurrently with the internship. This must however be approved by a faculty member before the internship is initiated and is generally discouraged. The internship course is designed to be taken last and independently so the student is able to make the most of this learning experience. Placing the internship last and by itself also allows students to travel and complete the internship experience anywhere in the world.

Students are eligible to start the internship experience when they are registered, all of the required agreements are signed, and the previous semester coursework is completed. Students must be registered for the internship course during the semester that they complete their hours of experience. The internship typically begins on the first day of classes of the semester and finishes before the last day of classes.

## 5. Site Selection

Although the faculty supervisor may offer advice, guidance or placement suggestions, students are responsible for seeking out their own internship positions. Students should begin searching for possible internships several months prior to their chosen internship semester. This allows ample time for the application/interview process and a thoughtful selection.

The site selection process typically entails:

- Searching for prospective sites using all available resources (e.g.: Internship coordinator, faculty mentors, Mason Hire, etc.). Please be aware of and adhere to, the site supervisor credential requirements for each specific concentration area.

- Following the application and interview processes specified by individual sites. It is typical for a student to apply to 3-6 different sites.
- Obtaining the internship coordinator's approval to apply if student previously worked or interned at the site, and wants to apply this site towards the internship experience. The student must justify in writing how this site can provide further learning opportunities beyond what has already been experienced.
- Completing the *Site Confirmation Form (Appx.3)* once a site has been secured, which must be approved by the internship coordinator, the *Consent Agreement (Appx 4)* and *Experiential Learning Agreement (Appx. 5)*. These forms require signatures from the student intern, the site and the university and must be completed prior to the internship start date. If a site has not previously been approved as satisfying the capstone/synthesis course requirements in Appendix 2, faculty approval must be obtained regarding the selected site. Longer term agreements are available for sites that have multiple student intern placements over time.

## 6. Requirements and Grading

The faculty supervisor assigns the Pass/Fail grade based on the student intern meeting the following requirements:

- Attending mandatory internship meetings or complying with other arrangements such as telephone conferencing and/or Blackboard conferencing.
- Working full-time at an approved site for a minimum of 400 hours (560 for TR) of professional practice over a period of 10 to 15 consecutive weeks—averaging 30-40 hours weekly.
- Completing *Weekly Progress Reports (Appx. 6)* in a timely manner.
- Submitting signed copies of the *Performance Assessment (Appx. 7)* completed by the Site Supervisor at the mid-point and completion of the internship hours.
- Developing and completing a *Special Project (Appx. 8)* in cooperation with the Site Supervisor. This requires approval by the faculty and site supervisors in advance.
- Meeting with the site supervisor and the faculty supervisor during a routine visit at the internship site. Alternative arrangements are made for those interns based outside the northern VA metropolitan area. The student intern is responsible for scheduling this visit shortly after the mid-point evaluation has been completed.
- Presenting an overview of their internship work experience and special project (See *Presentation Guidelines, Appx. 9*) at a mandatory final presentation attended by all of the current interns, the faculty supervisor, and program faculty. This will occur at the end of the semester and prior to conferral date. Other arrangements are made for students interning outside of the northern VA metropolitan area.
- Submitting an internship portfolio (*Portfolio Guidelines* in Appx.10) which encapsulates the experience of the internship. Also included in the portfolio will be *Evaluations (Appx. 11)* designed to encourage reflection and assessment of the overall internship experience. This will help SRHT faculty evaluate the internship site, supervisors, and the overall internship experience.

## 7. Academic Policies on Registration and Withdrawing

Students must comply with University *Academic Policies* for registering, attending, dropping or withdrawing from a course as outlined in the University Catalog.

## 8. Responsibilities

### Student Intern

- **To the faculty supervisor**
  - Reading and adhering to all policies and procedures in the *SRHT Internship Manual, and syllabus*; and
  - Notifying the faculty supervisor as soon as possible, if he/she is unable to complete the internship program.
- **To the site supervisor**
  - Providing contact information (e.g., address, cell phone);
  - Reporting directly to the site supervisor for instructions and fulfilling his/her duties as stipulated by their supervisor;
  - Familiarizing and abiding by all site policies and procedures applicable to his/her performance, conduct and behavior;
  - Visiting, observing and participating, as appropriate, in all levels of the site's operations, including meetings, programs, projects and training sessions;
  - Setting mutually satisfactory and feasible performance objectives in consultation with the site supervisor since these objectives will constitute a baseline against which the student intern's performance is assessed by the site supervisor;
  - Providing the site with all necessary paperwork to earn academic credit for the internship experience;
  - Seeking further clarification from the site supervisor when encountering tasks or problems that cannot be solved independently;
  - Notifying the site supervisor in advance when it is necessary to be absent from work. The student intern should also inform the site supervisor as soon as possible if they are unable to complete the internship program; and
  - Conforming to the work and holiday schedule of the site at which they are interning.

### Internship Coordinator/Faculty Supervisor

- **General**
  - Ensuring that the university's agreements are finalized by all parties and the original is kept on file;
  - Ensuring that all non-Mason agreements/contracts involving student intern placements are reviewed by University Counsel before finalization;
  - Checking that each student intern is properly enrolled into an internship course;
  - Marketing the internship program to prospective internship employers and students;
  - Fielding and reviewing queries about the SRHT's internship program from the media, current and prospective sites, and students; and
  - Acting as internship program liaison among SRHT and university administrative units (University Counsel, University Career Services, etc.).
- **To the student intern**
  - Informing students of the advantages of the internship program within their professional field and counseling them on how to best coordinate the program with their academic timetables;

- Identifying potential internship placement sites along with relevant resource materials and any specifications regarding particular sites;
- Orienting potential intern students to important aspects of internship program through seminars and academic advising sessions;
- Helping students to set realistic learning objectives for their internship;
- Assuring that students understand the requirements of the internship program as detailed in the SRHT Internship Manual;
- Providing students with all the necessary documents and forms necessary for successfully completing the internship;
- Verifying that each student is enrolled in the correct 490 course in order to be able to enter a grade;
- Maintaining regular communication with the student intern during the internship and responding to weekly reports;
- Conducting a site visit near the midpoint to the site as arranged by the student intern to become better acquainted with the students' internship experience and to discuss with site supervisor student intern progress through the internship program (alternative arrangements are made for student interns based outside the northern VA area);
- Holding a mandatory on-campus seminar for student interns to give final presentations;
- Assessing student intern work and assigning a final grade;
- Reviewing evaluations made by the student intern about the SRHT internship program, internship site, site supervision, and overall experience for program improvement purposes; and
- Disengaging the student intern when the university, site and student intern agree that a different placement would be in the best interest of the student intern.
- **To the site supervisor**
  - Assisting the site supervisor to develop an internship job description that is mutually satisfactory to both the site and the student intern;
  - Providing site supervisor with SRHT Internship Manual that highlights internship expectations and responsibilities;
  - Maintaining open communication with the site supervisor concerning student intern's progress through the program; and
  - Conducting a site visit to meet the supervisor and tour the site while reviewing student progress and discussing continued relationship.

## Site Supervisor

- **To the student intern**
  - Developing an internship position description which exemplifies a synthesis requirement with mutually beneficial and rewarding learning experiences for both the participating student intern and site;
  - Preparing the site staff for the arrival of the student intern, and orienting the student intern to the site's history (e.g., organizational chart, philosophy, policies and regulations, administration, programs, and facilities);
  - Interpreting and communicating the aims and outcomes of the internship program to other site personnel which allows the student intern to be presented to staff in such a manner to ensure his/her professional status;

- Allowing the student intern, within reason, to observe and participate in site activities, such as meetings, programs, projects and training opportunities so as to obtain a broad and relevant pre-professional work experience;
  - Providing an opportunity for the student intern to assume an active role by assigning projects or tasks;
  - Assigning routine administration and management tasks to the student intern in order for him/her to gain a greater understanding of the organization's operation;
  - Conferring with the student intern to select a mutually beneficial required special project for the student intern to complete as part of their internship requirement (the special project facilitates the student intern's learning experience while making a meaningful contribution to the site);
  - Scheduling regular meetings with the student intern to provide consistent and frequent feedback regarding the site's work expectations and student intern performance;
  - Assessing the student intern's performance by completing two evaluations at the mid-point and final completion of work hours; and
  - Permitting the student intern to attend periodic internship seminars as needed (other arrangements are made for student interns interning outside of the northern VA area).
- ***To the faculty supervisor***
    - Providing resource material describing the internship and site to better inform future student interns about internship opportunities;
    - Submitting signed copies of the performance assessments after discussion and agreement with the student intern;
    - Providing an opportunity for a site visit near the mid-point of the internship experience; and
    - Communicating, as warranted, regarding any suggestions or concerns about the internship program.

## **9. Removal or Dismissal of Student Intern**

Every effort should be made by the faculty supervisor and the site supervisor to support the internship learning process, but on occasion, it may be necessary to either a) remove an student intern from one site for reassignment to another site, or 2) dismiss a student intern from his/her internship. Because of differing site guidelines and stipulations within the university, each student intern case must be considered separately. However, the following paragraphs discuss general guidelines for removal or dismissal.

### **Removal of a Student Intern by Faculty Supervisor from a Site**

Circumstances may arise where it is necessary for the faculty supervisor to remove a student intern from a particular site, and relocate him/her to another site without academic penalty. These circumstances can include significant violations of terms of engagement on the part of the site, intimations or conflicts between site supervisor/personnel and the student intern, sexual or other harassments, unsafe working environment, labor-related disruptions, and site bankruptcy or financial exigency. Any of these circumstances may require immediate intervention and or removal of the student intern from the internship.

If a student intern is unable to carry out internship duties due to personal reasons (e.g. medical, emotional), all parties will be notified and any appropriate interventions will be employed. This might necessitate removal of the student intern from the site placement prior to completion of the 400 or 560 hour requirement. The faculty supervisor will convene with the site supervisor to determine a mutually agreed upon course of action that benefits the student's internship experience while also meeting the site's and university's expectations. These situations are rare and shall be assessed on a case by case basis.

### **Student Intern Request for Removal from a Site**

Circumstances may arise where a student intern feels compelled to request removal from a site. The student intern cannot initiate any change in internship assignment until the following procedure has been followed:

1. The student intern must provide the faculty supervisor a written statement outlining reason(s) for removal from the site as soon as possible. The student must meet or phone conference with faculty supervisor to discuss and confirm removal reasons.
2. Removal decisions rest with the faculty supervisor and the internship coordinator who should share removal consideration with the site supervisor before making a final decision. If removal is deemed necessary, typically, a two-week resignation notice should be given by the student intern to the site.
3. Because the internship is meant to be a long-term experience with one site, the student will restart his/her hours at the new site.

### **Dismissal of student intern by site supervisor**

Termination of a student's internship program by a site supervisor is a serious matter and as such, the university expects the site supervisor to make immediate contact with the faculty supervisor if circumstances arise that could eventually lead to the dismissal of a student intern. The reasons for the termination should be discussed and understood by the faculty supervisor. Possible grounds for dismissal of a student intern by a site (and hence termination of the *Experiential Learning Agreement* between the University and site) can include lack of student intern responsibility, engagement by the student intern in illegal or unethical conduct, and violation of site's policies.

If possible, every effort should be made to reconcile the issues with the understanding that ultimately the site can make the final decision per the *Experiential Learning Agreement*. The faculty supervisor will discuss the student intern infraction with the site supervisor and the student intern separately to determine any possible resolutions. In light of a dismissal decision, the faculty supervisor will determine if the dismissal merits a failing grade.

## **10. Concentration Specific Requirements**

Please review specific concentration requirements with your internship coordinator:

**Parks and Outdoor Recreation (POR) and Therapeutic Recreation (TR) - Dr. Brenda Wiggins**  
([bwiggins@gmu.edu](mailto:bwiggins@gmu.edu))

## **11. Forms**

The following forms are located in the appendix of this manual and can also be accessed via Blackboard.

## Appendix

1. *Student Checklist*
2. *Eligibility Form*
3. *Site Confirmation Form*
4. *Consent Agreement*
5. *Experiential Learning Agreement*
6. *Weekly Progress Report*
7. *Performance Assessment*
8. *Special Project Proposal*
9. *Presentation Guidelines*
10. *Portfolio Guidelines*
11. *Evaluations*

**TR Students** should visit the NCTRC Job Analysis Task Domains at the address below as suggested guidelines to be exposed to within the internship.

<http://www.nctrc.org/documents/NCTRCIntern013110.pdf>