

Department of Exercise and Sport Science

University of Central Arkansas

Pre-Internship Guide for Exercise Science Majors

Purpose and Importance of an Internship

The internship is a culminating learning experience for students in Exercise and Sport Science. This experience allows students the opportunity to practice the application of theory and apply the knowledge acquired through academic preparation. Experience at the internship site not only draws on major or minor course offerings, but also makes possible the integration of course work from all fields of study in the development of professional skills.

The internship is an in-depth supervised work and study experience, based on the student's certifications, expertise, knowledge, and career goals. The student should have a degree of responsibility for planning, directing and evaluating his/her progress and developing as a professional through the completion of assignments. In addition, the student selects, with the guidance of the facility's Center Coordinator of Internship Education (CCIE), a major project for which she/he has total responsibility. The desired result of this course design is to stimulate good judgment and sound decisions while improving problem solving, communication, human development and relation building skills.

An internship is included as part of the student's program of study for several reasons. First, the internship serves as the final segment of the formal education process. This experience, following the in class instruction, provides the finishing touches for the student about to enter the job market in his/her respective field. Second, entry into the job market usually requires experience on the part of the applicant. The internship helps the student meet this experience requirement. Third, the internship often serves as a stepping-stone to employment. Sometimes the student is hired by the facility with which the student has interned. At other times, the student networks with professionals in the field and makes valuable contacts that may lead to employment opportunities.

The internship can be a wonderful experience for the student. When the student takes full advantage of the opportunities afforded by the internship, he/she will reap numerous benefits. The professionals at the internship sites have much knowledge to impart to the student if he/she is willing to learn. The student will often have the opportunity to encounter many unique types of situations first hand that they otherwise would have, at best, only read about in books or heard about in a lecture. Additionally, the professional links that are made during the internship experience are invaluable.

Students should select an internship that will help them meet their career objectives. The internship should be the most important learning experience in your college career. Do not waste it. Think about the career you want and begin now to work toward an internship that will help achieve entry into that career field.

The goals and objectives of the internship program are:

- I. To provide students with the opportunity to integrate and connect academic materials to the world of the practitioner, while building professional skills in a health-fitness facility.
 1. To acquire leadership experience in a professional setting by participation in daily operations and by planning and implementing a major project.
 2. To gain an overview of the organizational operation including its organizational structure, culture, philosophy, clientele relations, staffing and personnel patterns, administration policies, and budgeting processes.
 3. To gain experience with communication skills, writing memos, reports or proposals, speaking to individuals and groups at meetings or programs, and computer communications as applicable.
 4. To acquire experience in applying concepts of human development and education by maintaining appropriate professional relationships with co-workers and the facility's clientele.

- II. To provide the opportunity for the student to learn from a qualified and experienced professional in the field, who can facilitate the learning process and assist in identifying the student's strengths and weaknesses.
 1. To identify a path of professional development appropriate for the internship student.
 2. To provide a consistent level of professional supervision, guidance, and evaluation.
 3. To place students with supervisors who have an earned degree in a related field of study and significant work experience.

- III. To provide the facility with unique opportunities of sponsoring an internship student.
 1. To provide an entry level professional for a specifically designated period of time.
 2. To provide the opportunity for the facility and the site supervisor to enhance the profession by contributing to the training of a future colleague.

- IV. To provide the university with the unique opportunities of sponsoring an internship student.
 1. To maintain current knowledge of practical situations encountered in professional practice.
 2. To receive feedback for curriculum development.

The student's role in relation to professional conduct during the internship is to:

1. Become familiar with and adhere to facility policies and practices, as do other professional employees.
2. Maintain neat and clean grooming and dress that is appropriate for the job tasks to be performed.
3. Arrange mutually agreeable work assignments with the site supervisor.
4. Perform assignments and responsibilities to the best of your ability.

5. Consult your site supervisor if you encounter a problem.
6. Work the agreed upon hours, including weekend, holiday, or evening hours.
7. Take opportunities presented to develop professional skills and abilities and to integrate this learning with previous knowledge.
8. Follow the policies and duties outlined by the facility and to meet all scheduled commitments and arrangements made in connection with internship assignments.
9. Share your ideas and knowledge with facility personnel.
10. Be supportive of the facility's leadership and programming methods.

The student's role in relation to university expectations is to:

1. Attend scheduled meetings with the internship coordinator the semester prior to your participation.
2. Know what is expected of the internship experience as outlined in this guide.
3. Know the due dates for assignments and submit them accordingly.
4. Maintain personal copies of reports submitted to the internship coordinator to include in your portfolio presentation.
5. Contact the internship coordinator if questions arise which require clarification.
6. Arrange a visit from the internship coordinator with you and the site supervisor at your internship site to discuss the progress of the internship. Phone/email contact will be used when site visits are not feasible.
7. Inform the internship coordinator of any significant problems at the internship site.

The student's role in relation to personal arrangements is to:

1. Register and pay fees for course credits.
2. Make arrangements for food, housing, transportation to and from the internship site, and other living expenses.
3. Make arrangements for any salary, stipend, or scholarship with the internship site you select. (Level and rate of payment is up to the internship site, and **is not required by the university.**)

The site supervisor's role is to:

1. Have an initial conference with the student to determine what type of learning experience will be mutually beneficial and rewarding and will provide challenge, growth, and success for the student.
2. Indicate acceptance of the student as an intern the semester prior to the internship by completing the Internship Agreement form provided by the student intern.
3. Discuss with the intern potential topics for the major project that will be mutually beneficial and rewarding. (The focus of the major project should be decided upon no later than week four of the internship.)

4. Consult with the internship coordinator as necessary. (Most communication will be completed by phone or e-mail because of limited staff and resources.)
5. Prepare the facility personnel for the arrival of the student intern and encourage integration at all appropriate levels as a professional in activities, projects, and programs.
6. Orient the student intern to the culture, philosophy, policies, programs, services provided, and instruct the student on personnel policies.
7. Provide the student intern with exposure, if applicable, to various testing protocols, teaching/assisting clients, assessing appropriate exercise variables, as well as any business aspects of the facility that will allow the intern to become completely familiar with all aspects of the facility's operations.
8. Confer with the student intern at least once a week to arrange schedules, discuss performance, and to analyze problems.
9. Complete midterm and final evaluations of the performance of the intern. The site supervisor will need to complete the midterm evaluation approximately 10 days prior to the deadline for midterm grades. The site supervisor will need to complete the final evaluation at the end of the internship. This evaluation should be turned in no later than one week prior to finals. NOTE: The midterm and final evaluations should be completed as a professional document, both neat and legible. If the site supervisor prefers to type the responses, a copy of the evaluation can be distributed through e-mail upon request.
10. Sign the log sheet, which documents the hours worked by the intern.
11. Inform the internship coordinator of any concerns with the performance of the intern.
12. Cooperate with the university in evaluating the internship program and provide input into the curricular development process. Suggestions to better prepare student interns are welcome and desired.

The internship coordinator's role is to:

1. Monitor the student intern's experience and be available for consultation with either the student or site supervisor. This may in some cases be shared with other faculty on assigned bases and will generally be done by phone or email.
2. Oversee the student intern's curricular program to ensure the student intern has adequate preparation prior to the internship.
3. Assist the student intern to prepare for the internship by clarifying the internship procedures, describing the application process, and reviewing the student intern's resume and cover letter.
4. Advise the student intern in identifying, evaluating, and selecting an internship site.
5. Advise site supervisor on internship procedures and the selection of acceptable internship assignments.
6. Serve as liaison between the facility interns and the University.
7. Upon completion of the internship, review all assignments and documentation submitted by the student intern, and based on this information, assign the student intern's final grade for the internship.

Course Requirements

The internship is a course just like any other, and registration/enrollment into the course is necessary. Students may **register for one section of internship (equal to 168 hours), two sections of internship (equal to 252 hours), three sections of internship (equal to 336 hours) or four sections of internship (equal to 420 hours)**. Basis for enrollment will depend on how many hours are agreed upon by both the student and site supervisor. You cannot drop internship sections after the internship agreement has been signed. Once a student signs the internship agreement and agrees to work at their site for a designated number of hours, they must honor the contract and complete all of the previously agreed upon hours.