

CAHNR Guidelines for Academic Recognition/Credit for Internships

Overview

Experiences through which students can apply their academic knowledge in work settings are a vital component of a college education. These experiences are widely labeled as “internships,” but the criteria for, and oversight of these experiences vary widely among institutions of higher education and employers (hereafter Host).

To establish uniformity in the use and application of the term “internship,” the **National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)** recommends the following definition:

An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom (i.e., expands classroom learning) with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. 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.

Internships are a formal approach to meaningful on-the-job training for students. Properly constructed, they are valuable experiences that benefit both the student and the internship host, and in some cases may lead to permanent employment. Prospective students and their families are increasingly seeking majors that offer internships as a part of the undergraduate experience; it is critical that departments and the college have a mechanism for readily identifying the number of students that have participated in internships within their major(s).

Students can gain practical experiences through independent studies or field experiences hosted by faculty members. Some overlap may exist for skills obtained through these mechanisms and internships. The purpose of this document is to set forth guidelines that should be considered carefully by CAHNR academic departments as they implement their internship programs each year.

CAHNR/NACE Definition

Internships are distinguished by being earned outside the classroom and by a Learning Contract (see attached sample, *Form 1*) that is signed by the student, internship host and faculty member/dept head. These experiences will be recorded on a student’s transcript with a department specific course number and may carry zero or greater credits.

Credits Earned

Each department will establish an approach for determining the number of credits earned for a given internship experience keeping in mind the topics addressed in the **Additional Items to Consider by the Department** section of this document.

Summer Internships

Students participating in activities that they wish to have recorded as internships on their transcripts will need to have such indicated as

- (1) The department’s Internship course number with associated credits, or
- (2) The zero credit internship notation. This is a mechanism for communicating relevant experience without requiring payment for summer credit hours (a registration fee is required; see attached Sample *Form 2*).

- (3) Both (1) and (2) must have signed documentation (i.e., Learning Contract – See attached sample *Form 1*) in place before the internship experience begins.
- (4) Credits for internship activities engaged in during the summer cannot be awarded during the fall or spring semesters. However, a write-up or other academic products that would be submitted during an academic semester can be considered by faculty.

Learning Contracts

Each department will develop its own Learning Contract for internship experiences. To ensure that an internship experience is educational and thus eligible to be considered a legitimate internship (by the definition set forth by CAHNR/NACE), all of the following criteria must be met and Learning Contracts should, at a minimum, reference/contain the following items:

1. The experience must be an extension of and outside 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.
2. The skills or knowledge of intellectual value learned by the intern must be transferable to other employment settings.
3. The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a position description with desired qualifications.
4. Clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework.
5. Evidence of supervision provided to the intern by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience, with routine feedback by the experienced supervisor provided to the intern.
6. Sufficient resources, equipment, and facilities are provided by the host to support the learning objectives/goals of the intern.

Grading

Each department will develop its own policy for grading of internships.

Additional Items to Consider by the Department (All University rules and regulations for credit restrictions apply during an internship)

The resident CAHNR Academic Department determines if the following items apply.

- 1) An Academic Department may consider GPA requirements and the instructor's consent may be required if a student is on academic probation.
- 2) There are limitations to the number of internship credits than can count toward graduation. 3) If a student plans to intern for a second time with the same host and wishes to receive academic credit for the experience, their Learning Contract must document the ways in which the second internship entails responsibilities or assignments that differ significantly from those of the first internship.
- 4) The minimum number of hours for an internship credit is 40. There is no maximum; it is up to the student to determine whether the work hours are reasonable.

Behaviors Expected of the Student Engaged in an Internship

- 1) Comply with any confidentiality rules in force at the internship site;
- 2) Observe all policies and procedures stipulated by the host;

- 3) Recognize regular attendance and compliance with all job requirements are essential; and
- 4) Confer at least weekly with the host supervisor to receive guidance on assignments, feedback on performance, and explanations of the organization's mission, objectives, methods, and operations.

Completion of Internship

The student will request that their host supervisor fill out the Internship Completion Form (See attached sample, *Form 3*). The student will receive academic credit or a transcript notation (zero credit option) once the internship has been completed to the host supervisor's satisfaction and the Completion Form has been signed and submitted by the student's host employer.

The student fills out the Student Evaluation Form (see attached sample, *Form 4*).

Sample Learning Contract Forms (UCONN forms- Four forms in total)