

AC 3: Internships for Academic Credit

3.1: Course Designations and Number of Credits

Internship for credit may be run as:

- Courses established in the NSHE Common Course Numbering system.
- Special topics courses.
- Independent study.

Departments or schools may decide to run a course as an independent study if the minimum number of students to financially sustain the course is not met. Provost permission is required to run a course that is not self-supporting. Courses may be run with students enrolled in different numbers of credits. This requires special set-up with the Registrar's Office before the start of the term.

An internship is not necessarily a capstone but can be used as a capstone at the discretion of the faculty and dean.

3.1.1 Number of Credits

The number of credits a student earns should follow these guidelines for a full semester:

Hours per week (academic work plus time at placement site)	Approximate total hours at placement site per term	Credits
10-15	110-170	3
16-20	171-240	4
21-25	241-310	5
26-30	311-380	6

For courses in shorter terms, such as a 6-, 8-, or 14-week sessions, the guidelines should be used to determine the number of hours per week required at the placement site.

The following examples provide hypothetical weekly schedules of internship and academic time accumulating to reach the totals in the table:

1. 3 credits: Intern spends one 8-hour or two 4-hour sessions at a placement site per week, attends a weekly 90-minute class session, and completes roughly 3 hours of academic work assigned by the instructor. Total = average of 12.5 hours per week.
2. 4 credits: Intern spends 12 hours at a placement site per week, attends a 3-hour class session every other week, and completes 4 hours of work assigned by the instructor per week. Total = 17.5 hours of work per week on average.

3. 5 credits: Intern spends 20 hours per week at the placement site, attends weekly 1-hour class sessions, and completes 3 hours of coursework per week. Total = 24 hours of work per week on average.
4. 6 credits: Intern spends 20 hours at the placement site, attends a weekly 3-hour class, and completes 6 hours of academic work each week. Total = 29 hours of work per week on average.

These guidelines are flexible and may change based on student availability, instructor needs, and the goals of each program. Students may complete more internship hours than they receive credit for due to programmatic limitations.

3.2 Eligibility to Teach Internships for Credit

All academic faculty, full- or part-time, are eligible to teach internships for credit with approval from their chair or dean.

3.3 Eligibility to Enroll in Internships for Credit

Prerequisites for internships for credit are stated in the academic catalog (for established courses) or may be decided by the course instructor in collaboration with the chair or dean (for special topics or independent study courses). Some placement sites require additional screening such as background checks, drug screening, or interviews. The cost of these expenses may be the responsibility of the intern. Interns must sign a liability waiver to participate in an internship for credit.

3.4 Selection of Placement Sites

Placement sites may be for-profit or non-profit organizations or businesses that exist in brick-and-mortar facilities or in an online virtual space (such as an online news organization, political blog, or digital repository).

Placement sites cannot be organizations or businesses where a student intern is already employed unless the internship is in a separate division, the intern will develop unique skills, and the internship takes place at different times from the hours when the intern is already employed and compensated.

The instructor or an appointed designee from the Division of Academic Affairs must assess and approve each placement site when the first internship at the site is established. This includes ensuring that the placement site will provide appropriate supervision from a qualified professional and that the business or organization has been registered and licensed at the state, city, or county level. Placement sites that are used repeatedly do not require additional site visits or approval but may be visited at the instructor's discretion. New supervisors at a placement site meet with the instructor.

A placement site representative must sign a Site Agreement Form and be willing to collaborate with the instructor to develop a learning plan.

The course instructor is the primary liaison to the placement site supervisor regarding student interns. A representative from the Division of Academic Affairs will be responsible for collecting and storing liability waivers and Site Agreement Forms and may facilitate back-end communications regarding establishing an internship.

3.5 Mandatory Training for Interns

Interview and résumé assistance is available through the Career Services Center (CSC); these services are optional, but encouraged, for students interested in enrolling in an internship.

The CSC provides required training to interns. Training takes place in the weeks before and at the start of the term and includes workshops on professionalism, boundaries, and workplace ethics. Students must participate in the CSC training unless they receive a waiver stating that the instructor will lead the training as a part of the course.

Training provided by the placement site is determined by the site. Hours spent in placement site training are counted as internship hours.

3.6 Academic Requirements

Many factors can impact the value of internships and the University and the placement site should take proactive steps to maximize the quality of an internship experience. Legitimate internship experiences must result in significant learning gains by the intern and may not simply be general labor conducted by a student. The U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division provides guidelines for internships that must be considered under the Fair Labor Standards Act (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010).

Internships for credit are a mechanism for students to apply theory and knowledge gained in their coursework and to enhance their education. For optimal learning to occur, there must be an understanding on the part of the placement site to mentor the student, as well as academic programming occurring in parallel to the student's on-site internship.

3.6.1 Required Curriculum Components from the Placement Site

An individualized learning plan will be developed collaboratively by the instructor and placement site and signed by the intern. It should be completed no later than the third week of the semester of the internship for credit (and sooner for accelerated terms).

3.6.2 Required Curriculum Components from the NS Instructor

While academic programs are responsible for supporting the infrastructure of internships, each course instructor is primarily responsible for developing the curriculum for students engaging in their internship-for-credit course. Students need to engage in significant reflection on their internship experiences throughout the semester. Instructors meet with interns on a regular basis, require assignments (such as research papers, analyses, or oral presentations), and provide assignment feedback throughout the semester.

3.6.3 Assessing Students' Performance

Whether an internship for credit receives a letter grade or an S/U grade is at the discretion of the academic program that developed the course (for existing or special topics courses) or the instructor (for an independent study).

The instructor should develop an intern assessment for the placement site supervisor to complete at the mid-term and end of the semester. This assessment of the student's performance at the placement site should not account for more than 50% of the student's grade in the course. The remainder of the grade should be based on the academic components of the course that were led by the instructor. The completed mid-term and end-of-term assessment should be saved in the instructor's records.

3.7 Assessing Placement Sites

Interns complete an evaluation of the placement site, which is shared with the instructor and the Director of the CSC. Poor reviews of placement sites may lead to changes in subsequent internship experiences at the placement site or termination of use of that site.

3.8 Terminating an Internship

An intern may be removed from a placement site prior to the end of the semester if requested by the site or by NS. The placement site may dismiss an intern if their performance is unsatisfactory or disruptive. NS may remove an intern from a placement site if, in NS's judgment, the supervision does not meet the intern's needs. Issues related to an intern's potential dismissal or removal will be submitted in writing and discussed by the appropriate site supervisor and NS, and appropriate remedial action should be considered prior to removal or dismissal.

If a student is removed from an internship for credit, placement at another site or acceptance into a future internship for credit will be determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the course instructor, dean or department chair, and a representative of the Division of Academic Affairs. Published deadlines for course withdrawal and petition processes apply.

3.9 Tuition

Students must pay all tuition and fees for courses used as an internship for credit.

3.10 Intern Compensation

Compensating interns is at the discretion of the placement site. Under federal law, academic credit cannot be used as compensation in place of payment from the company for student work at an internship; the academic credit an intern receives is for supplementary work under the supervision of an NS instructor. For-profit sites that use interns without providing financial compensation must sign a Site Agreement Form that ensures they are aware of the U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division

guidelines for internships under the Fair Labor Standards Act (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). These guidelines require that unpaid internships meet these criteria:

1. The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is like training which would be given in an educational environment.
2. The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern.
3. The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff.
4. The employer providing the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern, and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded.
5. The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; and
6. The placement site and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.

3.11 Related Information

- Liability waiver form
- Site Agreement Form to be signed by placement site supervisor and NS instructor
- Learning plan to be completed by placement site and instructor and signed by intern by the third week of the semester of the internship
- Evaluation of intern
- Evaluation of placement site
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2010). Internship Programs Under the Fair Labor Standards Act (Fact Sheet #71). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2011). Position Statement: U.S. Internships—A Definition and Criteria to Assess Opportunities and Determine the Implications for Compensation.

3.11.1 Revision History

- Approved by Dr. Joanna Shearer on 4/16/2015; Dr. Erika Beck on 2/13/2025; and President Bart Patterson on 5/12/2015.