

**Student Guide
to the
Westminster College
Internship Program**



**WESTMINSTER
COLLEGE**

**CENTER FOR CAREER
DEVELOPMENT**

Student Guide to Internships

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The purpose of this manual is to communicate information about the Westminster College Internship Program. This information is provided as a service and should not be construed as a contractual obligation. Users agree that the information may be deemed reliable but not guaranteed and therefore should confirm said information at the Internship Program Office. Westminster College reserves the right not to place students in the Internship Program at the College's discretion.

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What An Internship Is

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE):

- The experience must be **an extension of 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.
- The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.
- The experience has a **defined beginning and end**, and a job description with desired qualifications.
- There are **clearly defined learning objectives/goals** related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework.
- There is supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience.
- There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
- There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals

An Internship Is Not...

Guarantee of a Job Offer

Although some interns are offered part- or full-time employment as a result of contacts they make during internships, there is no guarantee that an internship will result in a job.

Over 70% of employers prefer candidates with *relevant* work experience. Internships are an ideal way to build information and referral networks.

Go-fer

Interns are not expected to perform primarily routine work for an organization. Internships should be meaningful learning experiences; whether or not they are meaningful is a judgment students must make in conjunction with the faculty sponsor. Since most positions and projects involve some routine work, we recommend that it be limited to not more than 20% of the intern's time.

Volunteer Experience

Regardless of the financial arrangements, interns are not the same as volunteers. They are accountable not only to a site supervisor but to a faculty sponsor who evaluates the quality of the *learning* experience. A volunteer may perform the same tasks equally well, but may or may not approach the internship as a learning experience.

A Job

Although interns work on projects for an employer, they should not view the internship as a job. Internships are, first of all, learning experiences. Some people learn more effectively through experience; internships provide that opportunity. **The credit interns earn is based on what students can document they have learned, not solely on the evaluation of their performance at the site.**

An Easy Grade

Most students report working just as hard, if not harder, on an internship as they do for classes on campus. Pursuing an off-campus internship along with several other classes creates a demanding schedule and requires a lot of time and energy. Students should be careful about planning internships during an otherwise heavy semester.

When To Do An Internship

Internships coincide with the Fall and Spring semesters or summer break. They may be done on a part-time or full-time basis during any term.

Most employers prefer candidates who have completed at least two years of college; however, smaller companies may be more likely to hire interns who have completed one year.

Internship Benefits

Benefits to **students** include the opportunity to:

- Test and apply academic theory in a work setting.
- Develop and expand knowledge and skills in a specific field.
- Work with professionals in the field and learn from them in a professional setting.
- Feel a sense of accomplishment through contribution to an organization.
- Clarify career goals.
- Be a more marketable candidate upon graduation. In fact, many large organizations hire their full-time entry-level employees directly from their intern pool and do not post openings externally.

How Does a Student Find an Internship?

Step One: Determine Goals

Before embarking on an internship, students must know why they want one. Have they defined their career or academic goals? If they have no idea what they want to do when they leave Westminster, or what they would like to learn from the experience, now is probably not the best time to do an internship. Instead, they should meet with the Internship Coordinator or Director of Center for Career Development to talk about decision-making techniques such as informational interviewing. Students should not commit to a three-month experience unless they are fairly sure that it will pertain to their long-term goals.

Step Two: Research Options

Students should schedule an appointment with the Internship Coordinator to brainstorm options. WC's online job posting database, Columns CareerLink, is one resource for searching current opportunities. Students should allow *at least* one month for finding an internship. Many large and popular internship programs have early application deadlines. To intern with a government agency or large corporation, students should start early in the academic year for the following summer.

Step Three: Get Hired

The Internship Coordinator can provide students with materials to help them to develop an appropriate resume and cover letter and will provide a critique of these materials for students. In addition, students may schedule a mock interview with the Center for Career Development to polish interviewing skills

Roles

- **Students** are responsible for defining their own learning outcomes within the parameters of their work environments. During the internship, students are expected to become participating members of the sponsoring organizations. The academic component of the internship allows students to communicate the learning that is occurring. This might include a learning journal, guided readings, regular meetings with a faculty sponsor, and an extensive final paper or presentation.

- **Site supervisors** play an important role in helping interns define realistic expectations for the experience and in providing training and on-site guidance. The supervisor regularly meets with students and provides feedback to the Internship Coordinator. Supervisors' evaluations provide valuable information on the students' progress.
- **Faculty sponsors** provide academic guidance by helping students combine theory with experience. These sponsors meet regularly with students to raise questions, challenge assumptions, and offer guidance. The faculty sponsor also evaluates the experience and assigns credit.
- The **Internship Coordinator** is the connection between the faculty, the student, and the work site. The Coordinator assists in the development of internships, screens and prepares students, and maintains contact with all of the people involved. The Coordinator is available to assist students with any internship-related issue.

Sexual Abuse & Harassment

Sexual abuse and/or harassment can take many forms ranging from unwelcome sexual advances to other verbal or physical behavior. Such behavior can create a very uncomfortable (i.e., embarrassing, intimidating, hostile or offensive) work and learning environment. Please refer to the Westminster College Student Handbook, which is available on the College website.

Sexual abuse and/or harassment of any form should not be tolerated. Often, miscommunication and misunderstanding can be resolved if identified and addressed early. If early intervention is unsuccessful, further steps will be taken. If an intern feels that s/he is being sexually harassed, the student should contact the Internship Coordinator for assistance.

Credit versus Non-credit Internships

Credit-bearing internships are offered to Westminster College degree-seeking students or Westminster College graduates who are pursuing certification for a program related to their degree. Participants must be 1) full-time students, 2) have completed 30 credit hours, and 3) be in good academic standing with at least a 2.0 cumulative GPA. The advantages of completing a *credit-bearing* internship are as follows:

- 1) The student receives **support and advice** from a faculty sponsor
- 2) The College works with the employer to ensure a high-level, academically-based experience
- 3) The internship will **appear on the student's transcript**.

Non-credit internships are available at any time to anyone. In some cases, students may not meet the requirements to receive credit or do not need the credit and choose to arrange an internship purely for the experience. Regardless of whether the internship is for credit or not, the definition of an internship remains the same. When an employer sees an internship on a resume, s/he will assume that the student has completed an experience that meets the criteria mentioned on page 1 and will likely ask about the experience.

The Westminster Internship Program

1. Internships are graded on a CR/D/F basis.
2. Some departments have a minimum requirement of three hours of internship credit for a major. Students should check with their academic advisor to see if their major requires an internship.
3. All college departments award elective credit for an internship.

4. No retroactive internship credit will be awarded. (A student cannot earn credit for an internship once it is finished.)
5. The department that houses the faculty sponsor awards academic credit. Therefore, if the faculty sponsor is from the business department, the credit will be BUS 399. Students should check with their advisor to find out how best to use internship credit. International students must earn credit within their major dept.
6. Summer internships carry tuition costs. Check with the Internship Coordinator for the current fee.
7. Students cannot register for summer internship credit unless they are in good standing with the Business Office or payment arrangements have been made.

Requirements for Internship Credit

	ITS 399	ITS 409
Minimum Classification	Sophomore	Junior
GPA minimum	2.0	2.5
Faculty sponsor	1 through academic dept	2 through two academic depts
# credits	1-4 (So. 1 credit)	5-12
Learning goals	Yes	Yes

Internships for academic credit require a **minimum of 35 hours (per credit)** spent on internship tasks. An additional 10 hours should be spent on learning journals, faculty contact, and other academic assignments.

# credits	Site hours	Academic hours	Total hours in term	"per week" average* (based on 15 weeks)
1	35	10	45	2h 20m on site + 40m on academics
2	70	20	90	4h 40m + 1h 40m
3	105	30	135	7 + 2
4	140	40	180	9h 20m + 2h 40m
5	175	50	225	11h 40m + 3h 20m
6	210	60	270	14 + 4
7	245	70	315	16h 20m + 4h 40m
8	280	80	360	18h 40m + 5h 20m
9	315	90	405	21 + 6
10	350	100	450	23h 20m + 6h 40m
11	385	110	495	25h 40m + 7h 20m
12	420	120	540	28 + 8

*This is an average—some weeks may be heavier than others

Procedural Requirements and Timelines

Initial Meeting with the Internship Coordinator

If planning to complete an internship for academic credit, students should meet with the Internship Coordinator at least one time before beginning the internship. The Coordinator is available to help students investigate internship sites, provide information regarding past sites, and assist students in the development of the skills needed to find an appropriate internship.

Registration

Once an internship site has been confirmed, the Internship Office will send the student information on how to report the internship through Columns CareerLink. Once this is taken care of, the Internship Coordinator will submit the appropriate information to the Registrar's Office to get the student enrolled in an internship course. If an internship is obtained after the semester begins, **the registration deadline is the same date as the official Add Day (and June 12 for summer internships)**. It is STRONGLY advised that interns complete this form as soon as the internship is confirmed. The Internship Office reserves the right to deny credit for internships confirmed after the registration deadline.

The Academic Side of the Internship

Choosing a Faculty Sponsor

This should be a full-time faculty member who teaches in the department the student would like the credit to be housed. In some instances, a member of the Professional Staff who has regular teaching duties may be the most qualified person to sponsor a particular internship. The faculty sponsor needs to be approved by the Internship Coordinator before finalizing selection.

Learning Goals

The learning goals the student develops for his/her internship need to be intentional, meaningful, clear, and specific enough that others will understand them and will be able to help the student achieve them. The time invested in articulating goals that truly reflect the intern's learning agenda will pay off in the benefit the student will derive from the experience.

Interns' goals usually fall into the following categories:

- 1) Knowledge development
- 2) Career exploration
- 3) Skill development
- 4) Personal development

There is no minimum number of goals that must be accomplished to earn academic credit. Whether developing a few broad goals, with several sub-goals, or several different specific goals is dependent on many factors. Keep in mind that this contract should represent a substantial learning experience.

Strategies

For each goal, identify at least one strategy for accomplishing that goal. A strategy is a statement of *how* the student will accomplish the goal. Examples of some effective strategies are:

- observing
- asking questions
- reading available materials
- receiving formal training
- performing tasks
- practicing skills and getting feedback

Assignments and Due Dates

The intern and the faculty sponsor will need a means of evaluating progress toward achieving the learning goals. Assignments usually include learning journals, faculty contact, and a final project.

Learning Journal: Interns complete a learning journal, which is submitted to the faculty sponsor on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. The learning journal is the main forum for the reflection that is so critical to learning during an internship. Learning journal entries are typically 1-2 pages in length and may be submitted to the faculty sponsor by e-mail if this is mutually agreeable. Most faculty sponsors respond to the journal entries and return them, or use them as a springboard for discussion during faculty contact.

There are many different journal styles and techniques. The critical incident technique is widely recognized as being one of the best for generating student learning from experience. It encourages the student to identify an incident that was critical in producing a change in their outlook, beliefs or understanding, and then analyzing the incident and its impact.

Faculty contact: Throughout the internship, the student **MUST** have regular contact with his/her faculty sponsor. The faculty sponsor may have a predetermined agenda for each meeting or may use the time to informally discuss the internship and what the student is learning. The faculty sponsor is a good resource for helping the student identify and solve problems at the internship site. S/he may also suggest readings and use the time to discuss the intern's impressions of the assigned material. Faculty contact time is a wonderful opportunity to share thoughts and ideas and to receive an expert's viewpoint on the internship experience. The faculty sponsor will help evaluate the student's progress towards his/her learning goals during this time. During the summer, faculty contact time may be conducted by phone or e-mail.

Final Project: The final project is the main product of the academic component of the internship. It provides a means for the faculty sponsor to evaluate the overall accomplishment of the learning goals and for the intern to summarize all that s/he has learned. The faculty sponsor will communicate his/her expectations of the project and the due date. It is suggested that the student develop a project that can be worked on throughout the internship or one that may be completed towards the end of the experience. Examples of possible projects are:

- Presentation to faculty or classes
- Portfolio of visual and/or written work
- Paper (generally five pages in length)
- Case studies or client profiles
- Products created during the internship (manuals, programs, etc.)

The faculty sponsor may have preferred methods of evaluation for interns, however most are open minded about how the student demonstrates his/her learning. It is important to take the time to develop a meaningful project.

Mid-Internship Evaluation

The student will receive an e-mail from the Internship Coordinator notifying him/her to complete the evaluation. Once the student completes the form, a copy will be sent to the faculty sponsor. The site supervisor will receive a similar form and is encouraged to share the evaluation with the student. This is a good opportunity for the intern to discuss his/her performance with the supervisor and compare ratings.

Comparing the student's Self-Performance Evaluation and the site supervisor's Intern Performance Appraisal will help the intern determine similarities and differences of perception. If there are large differences between the student's ratings and those of the site supervisor's, this may serve as a springboard for discussion. It would be helpful to resolve any differences between the two sets of expectations for the internship. **Academic credit is not based on the performance evaluation, but on the learning the student accomplished on the internship.** Use this evaluation as it is used in the professional world, for constructive feedback.

The final category for evaluation is "Progress toward learning goals". If the student is not making satisfactory progress toward the learning goals by the middle of the internship, this evaluation provides an excellent opportunity for the intern to talk with the supervisor about this issue. The intern may use this opportunity to request a change in responsibilities or to discuss a revision of the learning goals.

Final Evaluation

This form is also completed electronically by the intern and submitted directly to the Internship Coordinator and faculty sponsor. It is the final evaluation of the performance of the internship responsibilities. Again, a form similar to this will be sent electronically to the site supervisor. Comparing the student's and the supervisor's ratings from the mid-term and final evaluations will enable the intern to see improvements made in areas of interest, the student's particular strengths, and also areas that may need continued work.

Student Internship Evaluation

The student will complete this form and submit it to the Internship Coordinator at the end of the internship. This evaluation provides feedback to the Internship Program about the quality of the working and learning experience. This information is used to update and revise the program to meet the students' needs. The information that is provided is very important to the continuing success of the Internship Program.

In Closing...

An Internship is an exciting opportunity that allows the student to apply what s/he has studied in college. Students learn many things that would be impossible to learn in a classroom and have the chance to preview the professional world that many students don't see until after graduation. An intern is in a unique position to try a variety of tasks and roles, and also observe and interview professionals in their area of interest. This manual is designed to assist Westminster College students in maximizing their internship experience and furthering their academic and professional goals. It is the hope of the Westminster Internship Program that each student has a truly GREAT internship experience.