



**ELON**  
UNIVERSITY

Student Professional  
Development Center

## What Makes a Good Internship

### Elon Internship Description

An internship is a carefully monitored work or service experience that relates to the student's academic curriculum and/or career goals and earns academic credit.

As a unique form of engaged learning, an internship:

- is a credit-based educational strategy that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with work-based learning in a professional setting
- is an academic endeavor that is planned with intentional learning goals, careful observation, and structured critical reflection about the phenomena being studied/observed
- enhances academic knowledge, personal development, and professional preparation
- is offered by almost all majors at Elon University
- can be part-time or full-time during any term
- can be paid or unpaid
- is noted on both the academic and co-curricular transcripts

### Experiential Education

“Experiential education, which takes students into the community, helps students both to bridge classroom study and life in the world and to transform inert knowledge into knowledge-in-use. It rests on theories of experiential learning, a process whereby the learner interacts with the world and integrates new learning into old constructs.”

-Janet Eyster in *Liberal Education* Fall 2009, Association of American Colleges and Universities

### What Makes a Good Internship?

- Faculty sponsor, on-site supervisor and student understand the educational function of the internship and the effort to connect classroom study with authentic work world situations.
- Process involves student, on-site supervisor, and faculty sponsor as partners in setting initial goals, offering feedback, and evaluation.
- Intern is challenged with new and substantive progression of tasks
- Intern has a chance to gain feedback and reflect on the learning – academic, professional, organizational, personal, and ethical – in order to integrate knowledge and experience.

### Key Elements to Consider in an Ideal Internship

These elements may evolve in partnership with the organization, the university and the student. The order is flexible.

#### Intention

- Explain learning process
- Delineate expected learning outcomes that may result; focus on measurable learning objectives
- Understand why the student wants to do internship and identify knowledge/skills needed
- Understand why the company wants an intern
- Outline tasks/projects to be accomplished – assign meaningful tasks that require professional responsibility whenever possible
- Prioritize project list and reach agreement

- Have major ongoing project for student to return to when all other assignments are completed
- Explain evaluation process and determine how internship will be documented

### **Training**

- Training is a pivotal factor in intern success. Spend adequate time in introductions, cultural understanding, orientation to office organizational and physical structure, dress code, and job duties.
- Have appropriate space and equipment ready
- The site supervisor should be a professional who understands the objectives of an academic internship program

### **Reflection**

- Learning relies on relationships – frequent informal contact plus structured opportunities for critical analysis can transform the internship into a learning experience.
- Organizational “guide-by-the-side” anchors intern and drives learning
- Monitor learning objectives and outcomes throughout – provide feedback
- Encourage adaptation in response to feedback

### **Assessment & Evaluation**

- Establish systematic procedures to document and refine initial intentions and quality outcomes
- The university will provide evaluation forms to the organization and the student
- Partners will confer periodically during the experience to discuss learning progress
- Students receiving credit will complete academic assignments for the university
- The university faculty sponsor may do a site visit if appropriate
- Acknowledge and celebrate internship experience

If you have a **general internship** position, one for arts and sciences students, or want to develop an internship program, please contact Robin Kazmarek, Internship Director (336-278-6538, rkazmarek@elon.edu).

For **communication internships** please contact Amber Moser, Internship Director for the School of Communications (336-278-6336, amoser2@elon.edu).

For **business internships** please contact Lauren Bosselait, Internship Director for the Love School of Business (336-278-6065, lbosselait@elon.edu).