

Museum Studies Graduate Program Internship Supervisor Resource

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Introduction

What is an internship?

An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skill development in a professional setting. Internships have a high impact on students because they connect the classroom with the professional environment.

A high-impact internship:

- It is a structured learning experience.
- Has relevant and clearly defined learning objectives.
- Provides opportunities to apply classroom knowledge in a “real world” professional environment.
- Encourages interns to develop and refine transferable skills to various work settings.
- Has a defined beginning and end.
- Provides for supervision/feedback from a professional with expertise and background in that field.
- Includes resources, equipment, and facilities that support learning goals.

An internship is not:

- Primarily clerical or unskilled labor.
- An experience an intern gains nothing from.
- A vague, undefined experience.
- An unguided/unsupervised experience.

Internship Learning Goals

The internship is intended to help students:

1. Gain practical experience within the museum environment and acquire knowledge of museum processes, policies, and best practices.
2. Apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom professionally and identify areas for future knowledge, skill development, and growth.
3. Identify and examine museum career options while clearly defining personal career goals.
4. Build professional networks and participate in a community of practice.

Interns are not just free labor; they are **learning experiences that allow them** to apply what they are learning in the classroom, gain practical work experience, and learn from someone who has experience and knowledge in the field. While some students may be capable of completing a project independently without supervision, everyone's work and experience will be more rewarding with **mentorship** and **supervision**.

Before setting up an internship, ask your organization and yourself:

- Do you have the right resources to support interns?
- Do you have enough time to supervise an intern?
- What kind of learning experience are you best able to provide?

Planning the Internship

Great internship experiences:

- Have a final product or set of results with an agreed-upon vision for success.
- Consist of projects or tasks planned and assigned before interns arrive each day.
- Have a clear set of expectations that everyone involved agrees upon.
- Give interns an honest perspective of the organization's activities—the good, the bad, and the ugly.
- Provide opportunities for students to practice essential, transferable job skills.
- Provide professional development opportunities.
- Are meaningful to the organization.
- Allow for experimentation and promote learning from both successes and failures.
- Provide compensation to interns.

Types of Internships

A great internship experience gives interns ownership over a project or responsibilities. Whether the internship is **project-based** (focused on one defined project) or **operations-based** (focused more on the day-to-day operations of your organization, such as an education internship that would contribute to the museum but also have specifically defined learning outcomes), there should be a clear result or product. Your intern should be able to articulate what successful completion of the internship looks like.

Internship projects should help interns practice skills necessary in their field and across the job market. When planning the internship responsibilities, think about tasks that would help an intern develop the skills you would look for in someone you want to hire. Also, think about responsibilities that help interns learn about what a job in your department or organization is like, such as going to meetings or working with you on team projects. If the project doesn't help the intern develop essential skills or learn about a job in your organization, it might not work as an internship project.

Internship projects should be meaningful to you and your organization. Both interns and supervisors can take pride in an intern's work if it contributes to your institution's overall goals. Consider the strengths you and your potential intern bring to the table when planning a project.

- Interns bring a fresh perspective to projects that you may be stuck on.
- They are enrolled in courses that require them to research best practices and current trends and topics from the field and may help you brainstorm solutions or new models.
- Interns provide an excellent opportunity to generate feedback about how your department runs or how it may coordinate with other departments in your museum.

- Interns do not have to be tied to a single department and have a unique outside perspective. They can take on projects that help you re-envision the way you typically operate or how to bridge the gap between you and another department.

Ultimately, internship projects should allow interns to experiment and learn from successes and failures. It is better to challenge interns and help them develop critical thinking skills than provide only easy tasks within their comfort zone.

A Word on Compensation

Paid internships are more valuable both for supervisors and interns. Compensation ensures that interns and supervisors are committed to the internship and make the most out of it. Paid internships are more competitive, meaning you will have a larger, high-quality applicant pool. Furthermore, paid internships help incentivize attendance and higher quality of work. While budgets are tight, consider the types of compensation you can offer: travel reimbursements, discounted or free housing, stipends, or hourly wages to support internships.

Keep in mind there are laws around the legality of unpaid internships. Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, developed by the US Department of Labor, interns working for a for-profit agency must be paid unless they meet all 6 criteria the US Department of Labor laid out. While they do not lay out the specific requirements for nonprofits, no law exempts interns at nonprofits from minimum wage requirements. Your interns may be classified as volunteers or trainees.

Ask yourself: Is this something that staff would be paid to do? Is this an appropriate volunteer task? If the answer is “yes” to the first question or “no” to the second question, then you may need to abide by minimum wage requirements for the intern. You can refer to the U.S. Department of Labor publication, [“Fact Sheet #71: Internship Programs Under The Fair Labor Standards Act.” FS 71. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 2010.](#)

Internship Job Post

Writing an internship description is similar to writing a job description. You want to outline the scope and responsibilities of the internship, as well as the qualities and qualifications of your ideal candidate. However, internships are different from jobs in that they are primarily a learning experience for your interns. Therefore, you should include a section about what the intern will learn from the internship and what kinds of work-related experience they will gain that could help make them a more desirable job applicant.

Make sure to include in your description:

- Descriptive internship title
- Brief description of the organization
- Description of the scope of the internship
- Intern’s responsibilities
- What will the intern learn or gain experience in
- Description of what the ideal candidate will possess
- Compensation (details) or Unpaid
- Expected commitment (hours per week, number of weeks, and start and end dates)
- Required application materials
- Contact information

Once you have a written description of the internship, you should post it in places that will reach your intended audience. Post it to your social media accounts. If you want to recruit graduate students from the WIU Museum of Museum Studies, you can send the description to hk-lung@wiu.edu. Students receive emails updating them on new internship opportunities. If your organization has a Jobs page, this is another way for students to learn about your

internship. You can also post your internship with professional organizations, like state museum organizations.

Intern Screening

You can screen interns just as you would screen candidates for a job. Make sure to hold interviews with those interested in the internship to get a better sense of what they want out of the internship and to set the expectations early. Some of the worst internship experiences happen when the student's expectations and the supervisor's expectations for the internship do not align.

Orientation

Once you have selected your intern and are ready for the internship, you should take some time to orient your intern to your office environment. Part of the learning experience is to learn more about what it's like working in your organization. The orientation is a vital part of this process. Give interns a tour of your workspace and introduce them to others in your organization. Reiterate your expectations for your intern, including the following: work schedule, deliverables, and deadlines, communication and office policies, and etiquette, including your institutional dress code.

Requirements of the WIU Museum Studies Program

Required Forms

If you are hosting a WIU Museum Studies Graduate student, you will need to complete and sign the following forms with the student:

- An Internship Agreement Form (before the semester internship will take place)
- An Internship Goals and Objectives Form (first week of internship)
- Mid-semester and end-of-semester evaluations

The forms are the only required forms needed for the internship. However, you should always contact the WIU Program Director at should anything arise. It is not required, but interns are suggested to meet at least weekly with their supervisor to touch base and report on progress.

WIU Specific MST 600 Museum Internship Course Requirements and Guidelines

If the intern is applying the internship to their program requirements, the following guidelines apply:

1. The supervising institution and the MST program will jointly agree upon a student's placement in the agency after consulting with the student and considering the student's needs in relation to what the institution can provide. The MST program maintains the right to reject and terminate any student-arranged internship deemed unsuitable.
2. All forms and assignments will be accessible via the MST 600 Museum Internship course site within Western Online. Please complete and submit forms, reports, and other course assignments on time to ensure a passing grade. See the timeline posted at the end of this syllabus for more information.
3. Students must attend a pre-internship meeting with the MST Program Director and complete all required paperwork to initiate the internship agreement before registering for MST 600.

4. A statement of internship goals and objectives will be submitted by the end of the first week of the internship. The statement must be signed by both the student and the site supervisor and submitted to the faculty supervisor (online). Failure to submit the statement on time may result in the internship being terminated.
5. Students will spend at least 10 consecutive weeks at 20 hours per week (or 200 hours total) in professional fieldwork and related studies for which four (4) semester hours of credit will be received upon satisfactory completion. This must be a block of time following completing 21 semester hours in the museum studies program.
6. Students will have the status of interns and are not to replace staff. The student must follow the host institution's rules, regulations, and policies. Failure to do so could result in the termination of the internship.
7. The supervising institution will assign a staff member qualified by professional registration, education, or experience to supervise the fieldwork. If needed, a resume may be submitted to the faculty advisor for review. The site supervisor must be given a time allotment for supervising the student and will submit a summary evaluation of the student's work.
8. Students will be assessed through the completed evaluations, presentations, assignments, and publications associated with the internship project. Due to the variety of internship projects, some assignments may be customized to the specific project. Details about required forms and assignments are in this syllabus and can be located on Western Online.

Roles and Responsibilities

Student Responsibilities

- Complete at least 21 credit hours in the museum studies program before seeking an internship.
- Meet with a faculty advisor to discuss internship site and project options.
- Develop resume to present to internship site for review.
- Contact possible internship sites for interviews.
- After a student is offered an internship opportunity, complete the Internship Agreement Form and submit it to a faculty advisor.
- Become acquainted with site policies through the staff and your research.
- Discuss with the faculty advisor what kinds of presentations and publications will be developed for the assessment.
- Complete the Internship Goals and Objectives form and submit it to the faculty advisor online.
- Pursue the internship with enthusiasm and professionalism. Don't forget you represent all that is WIU-Museum Studies.
- Submit weekly reports and assignments online and on time.
- Complete two-semester evaluations and meet with the site supervisor to discuss progress.
- Coordinate with the faculty advisor your presentation or project.
- Complete an exit interview with a faculty advisor.

Site Supervisor Responsibilities

- Review internship requirements and forms to understand.
- Conduct a formal interview with the student before placement.
- Sign agreement form (optional: resume of the person who will be the supervisor for the student)
- Work with students to develop goals and objectives for the internship project and collaboratively develop a list of duties and responsibilities.
- Provide students with information about the site and any personnel policies and procedures.
- Meet weekly with the student or as needed to provide support and assess progress.
- Complete mid and end-of-semester evaluations and meet with the student to discuss.
- Mentor students in professionalism.
- Meet with the faculty advisor and ask questions as needed.
- Discuss concerns promptly.

Faculty Advisor Responsibilities

- Maintain and make available current information regarding internships.
- Meet with student pre-internship to discuss placement.
- Make sure all parties sign the agreement and goals forms.
- Review reports, evaluations, and assignments as they are submitted.
- Complete a site visit (optional).
- Review and assess evaluations, presentations, publications, and assignments.
- Assist site supervisors and students with communication and other activities as needed.
- Facilitate an exit interview with students reflecting on the internship experience.
- Submit grades.

Museum Internship Timeline

Event and/or Form	Date Due	Submitted
Agreement Form	Before the start of the internship	Emailed/hand delivered
Goals and Objectives Form	First week of internship	Course Site Dropbox
Mid Semester Student Performance Evaluation (site supervisors complete the form and review it with student)	Weeks 4-6	Course Site Dropbox
End of Semester Student Performance Evaluation (site supervisors complete the form and review it with student)	Week 9-10	Course Site Dropbox
Student Presentation or Publication	Week 10	Arrange with Faculty Supervisor