

PENN STATE ERIE, THE BEHREND COLLEGE
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES
POLITICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM

INTERNSHIPS

INTRODUCTION

The School of Humanities and Social Sciences defines an internship as “Any carefully monitored work or service experience that has established learning goals, and in which a student actively reflects upon his/her experience under the guidance and supervision of an on-site mentor and a Penn State Behrend faculty member.” Only courses with a 495 designation are considered internships.

WHY INTERNSHIPS?

Internships offer students an opportunity to apply classroom knowledge in a professional environment. Many advantages result from this field experience, including establishment of professional contacts, exploration of career options, valuable work experience, as well as a sense of personal accomplishment. Sponsoring organizations also gain from student internships, as they are afforded a chance to observe employment prospects on a relatively long-term basis and can accomplish projects that might not be otherwise possible at existing staff levels. Internships can be flexibly structured based on the needs of the sponsoring organization and the student, subject to School of Humanities and Social Sciences Internship Policy Guidelines. Internships are not required for political science majors at Penn State Erie, the Behrend College, but are highly recommended for students who wish to pursue a career in government or politics.

This document describes the involved parties, responsibilities of each party, the internship process and political science program policies.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

A successful internship program requires the cooperation of four individuals, each with specific responsibilities. They are:

1. Student Intern: The Intern is a currently enrolled student who is eligible to engage in a University-approved internship opportunity.
2. Faculty Supervisor: The Supervisor is an official university representative who has faculty status and is responsible for the academic oversight of the internship.
3. Site Supervisor: The Site Supervisor is the officially recognized professional at the approved sponsoring organization who is responsible for the on-site supervision and evaluation of the Intern.
4. Internship Coordinator: The staff of the Career Development Center serves as a link between the academic and political and government communities.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Career Development Center (CDC) Internship Coordinator: The CDC Internship Coordinator is responsible for maintaining lists of contacts and potential internship positions. Every effort will be made to provide positions for all qualified students.

Student Intern: The student is responsible for making the initial inquiry into obtaining an internship, and for meeting all departmental and university requirements in terms of eligibility for the internship position and filing appropriate paperwork.

Student interns will conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. This includes the development of respectful and cooperative relationships with the site supervisor and other employees at the sponsoring organization. The student will establish and maintain regular and punctual working hours, and will conduct himself/herself in an ethical manner, conforming to the sponsoring organization's policies and procedures while executing the specific duties and responsibilities of the internship position. Failure to comply with the sponsoring organization's policies may result in suspension or termination of the internship.

The student will meet with the faculty supervisor periodically during the internship period. At the conclusion of the internship, the student is responsible for completing all major-specific requirements, including a journal and research paper. Information included in the journal and paper will be kept strictly confidential in the university.

Faculty Supervisor: The faculty supervisor must approve all potential internship positions as worthy of academic credit. Such determination shall be made based on the type of work to be performed, and by the contribution the internship will make to the student's learning experience.

The faculty supervisor is responsible for monitoring the student's activities during the duration of the internship. This monitoring should include at least two meetings between the faculty supervisor and the student during the internship period. The faculty supervisor will also contact the site supervisor to check on the progress of the internship midway through the internship period. At the conclusion of the internship, the faculty supervisor will assign the grade for the internship in accordance with the site supervisor's evaluation, and an internship journal and research paper submitted by the student intern.

Site Supervisor/Sponsoring Organization: The sponsoring organization agrees to provide a supervised, relevant learning experience for the student intern. The exact nature of this experience will vary from site to site, and from student to student. Requests for interns will be forwarded by the Career Development Office to the faculty supervisor.

The sponsor will appoint a site supervisor who will assume primary responsibility for the direction and on-site supervision of the student intern. The sponsor will ensure that the student is aware of all relevant office policies and procedures.

At regular intervals, the site supervisor will apprise the student concerning the quality of his/her work. If the quality of the student's work is considered poor or marginal, the site supervisor will notify the supervising faculty member, in order to develop appropriate corrective procedures.

At the conclusion of the internship period, it is the responsibility of the site supervisor to forward a written and signed evaluation of the student's performance. This evaluation should include a brief description of the internships activities, as well as an assessment of the proficiency and general attitude demonstrated by the student intern. A form is provided for this purpose, and the site supervisor is encouraged also to write a more expanded evaluation of the student's work.

STEPS IN THE INTERNSHIP PROCESS

1. A student considering academic credits for internship work should consult with a faculty advisor about possible internship sites and the role of internships in the student's academic program.
2. The student should begin the search for potential internships by visiting the Career Development Center or by considering any contacts suggested by members of the faculty or possibilities shown on the political science bulletin board.
3. The student must then contact offices offering internship possibilities and submit any paperwork requested by that office or any meet any interview requests necessary before the office will hire an intern.
4. At that point, the student must choose a faculty supervisor (any full-time political science faculty member) who will be responsible for working with the student to gain academic credit for the internship, who will let the student know of all academic requirements for gaining Penn State credit for an internship, and who will award the academic grade at the end of the internship.
5. The student must then register for POLSC 495 under the name of the faculty supervisor with whom the student has chosen to work.
6. During the internship, the student will meet periodically with the faculty supervisor to keep the professor updated on the internship work and to discuss paper topics.
7. At the end of the internship, the student will submit a site supervisor evaluation or letter, a journal, and a research paper to the academic supervisor by a specified due date in order to obtain the academic credit.

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INTERN EVALUATION FORM

To the Site Supervisor:

This form serves to document the completion of the internship for the student your office has sponsored this term. You can either return the form to the student to be included in the portfolio the student must turn in for academic credit at the end of a semester, or you can return the form directly to:

Penn State Behrend
Political Science Program
Kochel 170
5091 Station Road
Erie, PA 16563-1501

If you mail the form, you can also bring it to the attention of your student intern's academic advisor for the internship, whose name can be given to you by the student. Feel free to write a separate letter in lieu of or in addition to this form. The comment sections on the form are voluntary, and need not be completed unless you feel it appropriate.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in the Penn State Behrend Internship Program. Your participation has been very valuable to us.

_____ **Student Name**

Approximate number of work hours completed over the semester: _____

Signature _____

Title _____

Office _____

Date _____

STUDENT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Your frank evaluation is very important feedback to the student and to the program. It is also a major component in the student's grade for the Internship course. Please circle the appropriate choice.

1. Reliability: Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent
On time? Dependable? Keeps busy? Works steadily?

Comments:

2. Work Quality: Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent
Variable? Few Errors? Accurate & Thorough?

Comments:

3. Work Quantity: Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent
Low Output? Satisfactory Output? Unusual Quantity?

Comments:

4. Ability to Learn: Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent
Slow on new concepts? Needs repeated instruction? Grasps ideas quickly?

Comments:

5. Interpersonal Skills: Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent
Not friendly? Tolerated? Accepted? Pleasant & agreeable?

Comments:

6. Overall Student Rating: Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

Comments:

POLITICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM INTERNSHIP POLICIES

Registration: Before the internship begins, students must consult with a faculty member who agrees to serve as academic supervisor for the internship, who discusses the academic requirements for internship credits with the student, and who agrees to submit a grade for the internship. Students **must** register for academic credit in the semester during which the internship is performed, including the summer session. Students do **not** have to seek academic credit for an internship – they are free to use an internship for personal education and experience that is relevant to their future career plans without doing the extra work required to obtain academic credit for the internship.

Academic Credits: Students can seek 1-3 academic credits per internship. In general, the more credits sought, the more hours the student will be expected to work at the internship site, and the longer a research paper that will be expected. Students can consult their academic supervisor to discuss how many hours and how many pages in a research paper will be expected to obtain the desired number of credits. Three total internship credits can be counted toward the political science major or minor at Penn State Behrend. Three additional internship credits, if a student has more than one internship during an academic career, can be used to count toward the total number a Penn State student needs to graduate. In effect, these would be counted as elective credits. Students cannot get Penn State credit for more than 6 internship credits.

Hours: Students seeking 3 academic credits during a semester should expect to work at least 10 hours a week, and preferably 15 hours per week, at the internship site. Students working less than 15 hours a week will be expected to submit longer research papers. Internships for less than 3 academic credits can calculate their expected hours based on number of credits sought. Summer session interns can also calculate number of expected hours based on the number of hours expected for a full 14 or 15 week semester.

Site Supervisor Evaluation: At the conclusion of the internship, the student should ask the site supervisor to fill out an evaluation of the student's work, either through use of the attached form or through a separate letter, or through both the form and a letter.

Journal: At the conclusion of the internship, the student should submit a journal that documents how the work duties and responsibilities of the internship contributed to the learning experience, and should also include a personal evaluation by the student of the internship as to the role of the internship office setting in government and politics. Interesting stories and events that occurred during the internship should be included. Discuss the general format of the journal to be submitted with a faculty supervisor.

Research Paper: Each student must also submit a research paper related to internship work in order to obtain academic credit. The paper must connect political science research or analysis written previously with what the student has learned during the internship. The expected length of this paper will be dependent on number of hours worked and number of academic credits sought. Students should consult with the faculty supervisor to discuss paper length and possible paper topics.

Grading: Grading will be on the normal scale (A-F). Pass/Fail cannot be used for internship credits.