

# Department of Natural Resources and the Environment

*College of Agriculture and Natural Resources*



## **NRE 3690 – Field Study Internship**

# **GUIDE**

**FOR STUDENTS & EMPLOYERS**



University of Connecticut

## Guide to NRE 3690 – Field Study Internship

The Department of Natural Resources and the Environment is committed to producing graduates who are competent in their fields and ready to become productive, valuable employees. Internships are ideal for integrating classroom learning with planned and supervised work experience in the public and private sectors. The goal of this guide is to make the internship experience as “employer-friendly” as possible while still achieving the contracted educational goals for the student’s experiential learning.

### Internship Basics

NRE 3690 (Field Study Internship) is an internship under the guidance of an appointed faculty member from the NRE department who serves as the course instructor and follows the guidelines and requirements found herein. This experience-based course places students in an organization under the supervision of both a qualified professional in an organization (agency, business, NGO, University Center or laboratory) and a faculty member. Internships are a 3-way cooperative venture among an employer, a faculty member, and a student. NRE students participate in academic internships during the summer or while they carry a full- or part-time student course load. The fee associated with earning credit for academic internships is included in the student's regular semester tuition. Fees for internship credit taken during the summer will be under the summer tuition structure. Course credit will be awarded by the NRE faculty member based on the recommendation of the on-site supervisor and the learning product/s submitted by the student.

Students can receive pay during their NRE 3690 internship provided the learning contract is satisfied.

### The Student

The student takes the lead in developing the learning contract in consultation with the faculty member and the on-site supervisor, and indicates commitment to the internship by signing the contract. The student is responsible for learning the necessary skills and technical abilities expected by the supervisor and completing the learning product(s) defined in their learning contract. The learning product(s) may include a daily journal, a summary paper, etc. The learning product(s) can vary considerably based on the nature of the work experience, so they must be detailed in the learning contract. The learning products should document how the work experience and the educational objectives came together for a valuable internship experience.

In the summer semester, an NRE 3690 internship is often combined with a summer job. Scheduling the work hours required to satisfy the internship can be flexible to best suit the needs of the employer and student.

## The Employer

Participating employers gain a high quality, enthusiastic employee and a cost-effective means of recruiting and training potential future employees. Hosting an internship initially can require some organizational effort for an employer, but those that choose to host an intern will realize that the potential benefits far outweigh any extra effort. The employer selects a person within the organization who will serve as the daily, on-site supervisor. The educational value of an internship depends to a large extent on the mentoring abilities of the supervisor. Hence, the supervisor should enjoy and have an aptitude towards teaching and guiding. The supervisor will also approve the learning contract before the start of the internship and provide an evaluation of the student's performance at the conclusion of the internship.

Employers retain the ability to dismiss an intern as they would a regular (non-intern) employee. In addition to gaining the benefits from this experiential learning endeavor, an intern needs to contribute to the supervisor's project or program. The supervisor and faculty member must communicate issues of concern to each other and the student so he/she can correct any deficiencies. Job-related travel should be paid by the employer according to organizational policy. If the employer is located within the University (Center, laboratory, institute, etc.) the on-site supervisor and course instructor cannot be the same person.

## The Faculty

For NRE 3690 (Field Study Internship), a faculty member from the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment will be the course instructor. The faculty member will guide the student and be the point of contact for the employer and on-site supervisor. The course can be taken either semester or summer and can be taken for one to six credits. This course is open only to Natural Resources or Environmental Science majors that are Juniors or Seniors. This course may be repeated provided that the sum total does not exceed six credits. Students taking this course will be assigned a final grade of S (satisfactory) or U (unsatisfactory) based on the recommendation of the field supervisor and learning product(s), submitted by the student. To receive one course credit, 28 hours of work experience specific to the contracted educational objectives are required.



## Student Checklist

- Ensure you have Junior or Senior standing (>54 earned credits) in the Natural Resources or Environmental Science majors.
- Identify a potential internship. This usually requires persistence, enthusiasm, and knowledge about what you want. Speak with your faculty advisor, search the internet, and consult potential employers, Centers and institutes within the University, etc. for ideas. Some employers offering seasonal or part-time jobs might also be interested in participating in an internship. It is up to the student to make the inquiries to ascertain whether the employer is willing and able to participate.
- Apply for the job or internship position. The student needs make clear it to the employer about their intent to have an internship and the responsibilities of the employer. Provide the employer with a copy of this Internship Guide and learning contract form.
- Be hired or have an agreement to hire.
- Enroll in NRE 3690 (Field Study Internship). Any member of the NRE faculty can serve as the course instructor. Ideally the faculty instructor is appropriate to the internship topic.
- Develop the learning contract. The student takes the lead in the development of the learning contract with guidance from the course instructor and employer. The contract must be finalized and signed by all three parties before the internship begins.
- Perform the internship. Be sure to make progress on your learning product(s).
- To complete your internship, submit your evaluation of the internship and learning product(s) to the course instructor. An evaluation form can be found in this guide as well as the NRE department website ([www.nre.uconn.edu/internships.html](http://www.nre.uconn.edu/internships.html)). The completed evaluation should be submitted directly to the instructor. The instructor may make the evaluation available to the employer.

# Employer Checklist

- Send the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment positions suitable for an internship. Include application process information, employment dates, and list of duties.
  
- Find a potential intern. Beginning this process early is the best way to find a suitable student for your position.
  
- Hire or agree to hire a student (pending details of the learning contract).
  
- Develop the learning contract. The student takes the lead in the development of the learning contract with guidance from the course instructor and employer. The contract must be finalized and signed by all three parties before the internship begins.
  
- Provide onsite supervision. The employer designates a supervisor to ensure the student has the opportunity to meet the educational objectives in the learning contract.
  
- Conduct an evaluation of the student at the end of the internship. An evaluation form can be found in this guide as well as the NRE department website ([www.nre.uconn.edu/internships.html](http://www.nre.uconn.edu/internships.html)). The completed evaluation should be submitted directly to the instructor. The instructor will make the evaluation available to the student.

# Legal Ramifications

When hiring interns it is essential to keep in mind legal ramifications. Below, we have provided some sample questions to consider before hiring an intern.

## **When can the internships be unpaid?**

The U.S. Department of Labor (U.S. DOL) specifies that an internship can legally be unpaid ONLY if:

- 1. The training, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to that which would be given in a vocational school;*
- 2. The training is for the benefit of the trainees or students;*
- 3. The trainees or students do not displace regular employees, but work under close supervision;*
- 4. The employer who provides the training receives no immediate advantage from the activities of the trainees or students and, on occasion, the employer's operations may even be impeded;*
- 5. The trainees or students are not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the training period; and*
- 6. The employer and the trainees or students understand that the trainees or students are not entitled to wages for the time spent in training.*

## **How much, if anything, does an intern get paid?**

The employer and intern will agree that the intern will receive either college credit, a small stipend in place of minimum wage, or both if applicable; If any of the above six criteria are not upheld, the intern must be paid the minimum wage or a higher hourly rate if qualified; the intern will then technically be considered an employee, according to the U.S. DOL.

## **What are the steps that need to be taken when paying an intern?**

If the intern is to receive a stipend, the amount will be paid upon completion of the internship. The stipend amount and date of pay should be stated in a written contract or agreement; If payments will be made at regular intervals or on a pay period, the employer should check with the internal human resources professional or payroll professional to verify payment methods.

## **Does the company have to provide workers' compensation?**

Workers' compensation is provided to replace wages and medical care programs for an employee whose injuries or illnesses are work-related. Click here to view the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation.

## **Does the company have to provide unemployment compensation?**

Typically, interns are not eligible to receive unemployment compensation because they are hired for an end-date position. The Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs provide unemployment benefits to eligible workers who become unemployed through no fault of their own and meet certain other eligibility requirements.

## **What is the sexual harassment policy, and how do interns report an incident?**

The sexual harassment policy should follow the same guidelines as the policy provided for permanent employees. The policy and steps for reporting an incident should be shared with the intern during the orientation and explained in the company's manual.

## **What is the policy for international students? What is the insurance policy?**

The insurance policy will vary depending on the insurance company. Employers should consult with their insurance companies to determine if they need to be notified when an intern is hired.

## **Can employers ask colleges and universities to sign a "hold harmless" or indemnity agreement?**

According to the Principles Committee at National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Research, a hold harmless or indemnity agreement is not appropriate in the majority of internships. As a state institution, the University of Connecticut will not acknowledge a hold harmless agreement, but will work with a company to adapt one as needed. Please visit the NACE Research website ([www.nacweb.org](http://www.nacweb.org)) or contact the Department of Career Services for more information.