

# INTERNSHIP HANDBOOK



**Department of History**

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## **WSU Department of History Internship Program**

All undergraduate and graduate students in the History department may earn course credit while completing an internship that will give them valuable work experience in a history-related field. Internships provide opportunities for experiential learning and allow students to use the historical skills they have developed in the classroom in a professional setting, most commonly at museums, historical sites, or non-profit organizations. Interns might conduct historical research for an exhibit, collect oral histories for a museum or archive, design and conduct visitor surveys for a historical site, process archival collections, or document historically significant cultural or architectural resources.

### **What Interns Can and Cannot Do**

In accordance with National Council on Public History Best Practices, the Department of History requires that internships engage students in professional-level work that employs their history training, strengthens their skills, encourages collaboration and teamwork, and enriches their understanding of how history is applied in practice. Such work should be performed under the supervision of experienced history professionals willing to share their knowledge and insights. Work performed by interns should supplement the existing staff of an institution or aid institutions that do not have paid staffs. It is a violation of federal labor law to use unpaid interns to replace work normally done by a paid staff member. Moreover, interns should not engage in fundraising activities such as calling potential donors or stuffing envelopes.

Most of an intern's time should be dedicated to a project or projects that will provide the student with a tangible learning experience that allows them to build professional skills they can include on a resume. Some host institutions ask their interns to work on a specific opportunity or issue, while others provide students with a range of opportunities relevant to their professional goals. Host institutions may find the resources in the Appendix to this guide useful in developing a scope of work for their intern.

### **Course Credit and Compensation**

The History department only facilitates internships for students enrolled in HIS 4997 (undergraduate students) or HIS 7998 (graduate students). Students complete a 135-hour internship over the course of a single semester (Fall, Winter, or Spring/Summer). The start and end dates of the internship typically coincide with the start and end dates of the semester during which it will be completed. Students report both to a site supervisor within the host institution and to the Department of History's Internship Director. We encourage, but do not require, host institutions to provide compensation commensurate with the qualifications required for a position.

### **Early Termination of Internship**

The History department may terminate an internship if the student, the organization, or the Department believes that the student is making unsatisfactory progress and/or that the organization is not fulfilling its obligations. The intern, site supervisor, and Internship Director will address issues as they arise on a case-by-case basis.

## Role and Responsibilities of Students

Students are expected to:

- Work with the Internship Director to identify internship opportunities. The Department will facilitate placement, but it is incumbent on the student to locate an internship. Learning to identify and apply for professional positions is an important aspect of the professional training internships are intended to provide. Get started with the [resources on our website](#).
- Contact the History Department's Academic Advisor to register for the appropriate course (HIS 4997 for undergraduates and HIS 7998 for graduate students) after setting up the internship.
- Complete work as outlined in the job description.
- Behave professionally during the internship, which includes dressing appropriately for the work environment, arriving to work on time, and diligently completing the assigned tasks.
- If invited to do so, students are expected to write about their internship experience for the Department or College website and/or newsletter.

Course Assignments (submit to Internship Director via email):

- In advance of your first day at your internship: Read, complete, and submit the WSU [Department of History Internship Contract](#), together with a copy of the job description and offer letter from the host site.
- By the end of Week Six of the semester, submit a two-page midterm internship update that assesses your progress toward on the project(s) outlined in the job description.
- By the end of last week of classes, complete the [Intern Self-Assessment](#) and submit it together with an updated resume and a six- (undergraduates) or ten-page (graduate students) report summarizing and evaluating your experience. In the report, undergraduate students should discuss the mission of the host institution, describe in detail the work completed during the internship, and assess the internship as an educational experience. Graduate students should additionally place their work at the internship within the current literature and debates in the relevant field. Your final grade (S/U) will be based on these materials and your site supervisor's final evaluation.

## Role and Responsibilities of Host Institutions

Host institutions are expected to:

- Provide interns with workspace, an appropriate supervisor, and work with a clear educational benefit.
- Submit a job description that clearly articulates duties, expectations, and the terms of employment, and clearly identifies the site supervisor. Interns should be offered the opportunity to complete a specific project or projects that contribute to the mission of the host institution. They should also be allowed to observe the organization's operations

beyond the area of their assignment to gain a broader view of how the host institution functions (e.g., shadow their supervisor at meetings with other units/departments).

- Supply the intern with a formal offer letter.
- Complete a [mid-term evaluation](#) and discuss it with the intern in week six of the internship.
- Complete a [final evaluation](#) and discuss it with the intern at the end of the internship.
- Provide the intern with a non-confidential letter of recommendation at the end of their internship, unless the intern's performance was not satisfactory.

## **Role and Responsibilities of WSU Department of History**

The WSU Department of History is committed to helping students and host institutions make every internship experience a success. The Internship Director will facilitate placement, but it is incumbent on students to find internship opportunities. To this end, the Department will:

- Work with organizations to develop and/or review job descriptions, contracts, and offer letters.
- Assist host institutions in determining whether an undergraduate or graduate intern is best suited to their organizational needs.
- Post internship opportunities to solicit student interest.
- Review the intern's midterm update and site supervisor's midterm evaluation of the intern to assess progress and make any adjustments that may be necessary to help assure a good experience for the organization and the intern.
- Review the intern's final report and the site supervisor's final evaluation.

## Appendix: Resources for Host Institutions

### Key Elements of a Successful Internship

1. The internship has a defined beginning and end, a job description with desired qualifications, and clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student's academic training.
2. The scope of work defines an educational benefit that allows students to apply knowledge gained through coursework in a professional setting. The skills or knowledge learned are transferable to other employment settings.
3. The intern works under the supervision of a professional with expertise and education related to the internship project. The site supervisor clearly defines the goals and deliverables, offers guidance for the project, schedules regular meetings to stay up-to-date with the progress, provides feedback throughout the internship, and facilitates networking for the intern within the organization to obtain needed support for the project and to learn about the company and its working environment. The best person in this role is someone who enjoys mentoring.
4. The organization is prepared to host the intern for the internship duration. Make sure the intern feels welcome and is set up for success:
  - Provide logistical information for the first day: directions for parking, guidance on appropriate attire, identify who the intern will meet on the first day and where they will meet, etc.
  - Make sure all key staff members (HR, IT, Project Manager, Mentor, etc.) know that an intern is coming, as well as the start date and duration of the internship.
  - Provide the intern with supplies and equipment necessary to complete the tasks outlined in the job description.
5. End the internship as positively as you've started it. Some suggestions:
  - Provide an opportunity for the intern to present his or her findings to organization leadership.
  - Schedule time to allow the intern to turn over the project results and any further action items needed.
  - Provide the intern with formal feedback at the end of the internship, and if asked, provide a letter of recommendation if your intern's work was satisfactory.

## **What to Include in a Job Description**

1. Internship Title.
2. Organization Description: Brief information about the organization and department that is hiring the intern.
3. Internship/Project Description: Include an overview and objective of the project(s) the intern will be performing. It can include the broad function and scope of the internship, how the project will impact the organization and any specific expectations of the internship. You might also include any knowledge and skills the intern will acquire by completing the internship. Include the length of the internship (number of weeks) and hours per week the intern is expected to work. In most cases, students will work 135 hours over the course of a single semester, and the start and end dates of the internship will be coincident with the start and end dates of the semester.
4. Duties/Responsibilities: A breakdown and list of the principal duties and responsibilities expected of the intern to complete the project(s). If there is specific research or analysis that needs to be done, it should be included in this section.
5. Qualifications/Skills Required (or desired): Document any specific qualifications or skills required to perform the internship.

## **What to Include in an Offer Letter**

Specific details of the offer, including:

1. Number of hours intern is expected to work per week
2. Internship start date
3. Internship end date
4. Salary (if position is paid)
5. Location
6. Supervisor
7. Acceptance deadline