

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Department of Communication
Career Internship Program

ELIGIBILITY & POLICIES FOR STUDENTS

The purpose of this document is to formalize the eligibility requirements and policies regarding the granting of Communication credit in association with an internship. These requirements and policies reflect the standards set by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).

Internships and Learning

According to NACE, an internship “is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent.”¹

Therefore, an internship must contribute to the intellectual development of the student to merit an award of academic credit. An internship that warrants credit is composed of a relationship among a student, designated supervisory personnel from the provider, and sponsoring Departmental faculty. Sponsoring faculty members design assignments that apply Communication learning to the experiences and observations gained during the internship. These assignments allow students to reflect on their internship work and evaluate their own learning.

Some key outcomes of academic internships include:

- an understanding of the relationship between Communication theories and observation of communication interaction in the workplace
- development of professional workplace behavior
- improved communication skills
- acquisition of new “hard” skills
- greater self-awareness of skills, abilities, and potential
- leadership development
- improved time management skills
- development of a professional network
- personal and career development

¹ NACEweb.org

Criteria for an experience to be defined as an internship

To ensure that an experience—whether it is a traditional, in-person internship or one conducted remotely—is educational, and thus eligible to be considered a legitimate internship by the NACE definition and the Department of Communication, all the following criteria must be met:

- The experience must be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides for the application of knowledge gained in the classroom. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
- The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.
- The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description with desired qualifications.
- There are clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework.
- There is close supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience.
- There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
- There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals. ²

In addition to the NACE criteria, the Department of Communication stipulates that an internship must meet the following qualifications to be approved for academic credit:

- Directly applicable to the Communication major
- Sufficiently challenging with meaningful work
- Fitting for an undergraduate student who has not yet entered the workforce
- In line with the student's educational and/or career interests
- Offered by an established organization with strong, verifiable reputation, and positive feedback as provided by previous interns:
 - Minimum of 5 full-time professionals, not including other interns or part-time employees or students
 - Identifiable base of operation, even if internship is remote
- Internships may be paid or unpaid, although we encourage paid opportunities wherever possible.

² NACEweb.org

- All internship providers must comply with the non-discrimination provisions of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign:

“Based on the commitment of the University of Illinois to the most fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity, and human dignity, all decisions involving students are based on individual merit. It is the policy of the University of Illinois not to engage in discrimination or harassment against any person because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, unfavorable discharge from the military, or status as a disabled veteran of the Vietnam era and to comply with all federal and state nondiscrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative action laws, orders, and regulations.”

- To avoid the appearance of conflict of interest, students may not be supervised or assigned a grade by a parent or member of his or her immediate or extended family. A non-relative must be designated as a neutral, unbiased supervisor to guide the work of the student and assign a grade at the end of the semester.
- Interns may not be supervised or assigned a grade by an undergraduate or graduate student.
- Students may not “double-dip”: they must not be earning credit in another department for the same internship
- Minimum of 5 work hours per week, not to exceed 20 work hours per week during the Fall and Spring semesters
- Minimum of 5 work hours per week, not to exceed 40 work hours per week during the Summer term
- NOTE: Retroactive credit cannot be earned for internships completed in prior semesters. Course credit must be approved in advance of beginning an internship
- NOTE: Internships may be either paid or unpaid; this is not a stipulation for earning academic credit.

What does NOT qualify as an internship for this program

- Campus “brand ambassadorships” or similar arrangements are **not** eligible for credit.
- Certain remote “internships”, such as those acting as content mills for websites, in which contributors are unpaid or paid by the word.
- Any remote internship that cannot be verified by the Internship Program Director as being a legitimate organization.
- Doing work as a consultant or as an assistant to a consultant (must be an organization, not one person).

Location eligibility

During Fall and Spring semesters, we encourage students to find internships on campus or in the Urbana-Champaign community. This is to prevent students from driving long distances for an internship; regardless, it is the student's choice. During the Summer, students may work anywhere in the United States. Non-US based internships are not generally eligible for course credit.

Remote internships qualify for credit as long as they meet all the requirements stated above. **The Department of Communication cautions students to use their solid research skills and common sense when applying for remote internships.** Many scams abound. Make certain the provider meets the criteria outlined above. When in doubt, please contact the Internship Program Director for advice.

Student Eligibility

Student applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements.

Minimum Requirements

- Must be a Communication **major**
- Currently enrolled as a full-time student
- 45 earned credit hours in total
- 2.5 cumulative GPA
- **At least** 12 hours of successfully completed CMN coursework. In certain cases, the Internship Program Director may require more.
- 2.75 GPA in the Communication major or consent of Internship Program Director

Additional Criteria for Eligibility

- Breadth of Communication course preparation
- Completed courses in departments other than Communication that are directly and strongly related to the internship
- Quality of writing and attention to detail in the student's proposal document and ability to follow instructions
- Motivation, experience, time management skills, relevant extracurricular activities, and potential for academic growth and leadership
- Ability to succeed in an experiential context as assessed by student's academic advisor

Communication Internships course (CMN 304)

Student enrollment in CMN 304 is by permission only and is granted after the student has secured an internship and successfully proposed their internship for credit. **Students seeking credit for internships should consult with their academic advisor to discuss if an academic internship will fit into their progress towards graduation.** However, approval to register for the CMN 304 is granted only by the Internship Program Director.

Students who qualify may earn up to 3 credit hours per term, as determined by the Internship Program Director. CMN 304 may be repeated in subsequent terms for a total of 6 credit hours. A student who wishes to repeat CMN 304 must have earned at least a B grade in prior 304 enrollment.

Student Responsibilities

A student seeking credit for an internship must:

- Bear ultimate responsibility for finding, applying for, and accepting an internship.
- Provide a completed proposal document (a form provided by the Internship Program Director) stating one's motivation for taking the course; qualifications for the internship and the academic work; educational goals; specific activities to be performed at the internship that support those goals; and other information requested.
- Consult their academic advisor to ensure the Internship course fits in their path to degree completion.

Once approved for internship credit, the student must:

- Enroll in the course as directed by the Internship Program Director.
- Complete the Learning Memorandum of Agreement with their internship supervisor by the due date specified or bear the risk of losing their place in the course.
- Submit all other necessary paperwork throughout the course as instructed on time.
- Abide by course policies, including academic integrity and late policies.
- Complete all coursework with a passing grade.
- Participate in performance evaluation process(es) with internship supervisor as instructed.
- Meet expectations regarding agreed-upon work hours and scheduling.
- Receive a passing grade from the internship supervisor and the faculty sponsor.

Internship Course Information

Enrollment

Students enrolling for academic credit associated with an internship will enroll in the Communication Internship course (CMN 304), which is variable credit from one to three credit hours per term (determined by Internship Program Director), repeatable to up to six hours total, and letter-graded. Students cannot repeat the same internship for more than one semester of CMN 304 credit.

Length and start /end dates of internship

The student must begin the internship at the start of the semester or summer term, within the first or second week. Internships scheduled to begin past the third week of the semester will not qualify for credit. Internships must also extend the full length of the semester / term or within one week of its ending.

Requirements of Internship Course

The faculty member (usually the Director) must provide oversight of the academic instruction and assignments that relate to the internship experience. When completing CMN 304 with the Internship Program Director, the course work for internship credit will include activities such as regular journal entries, organization reports, informational interviews, and a portfolio of work samples. Specific assignments will be based on number of credit hours earned per term.

Grading

The final grade for the Communication Internship course is based 50% on the letter grade and 50% on the letter grade earned for academic coursework. The numerical equivalent of letter grades is based on the University grading scale: <https://registrar.illinois.edu/explanation-of-grades>. The student must pass **both** the academic coursework **and** the internship with a D- or higher to earn credit for the entire course. A “F” in either the coursework or for internship performance will result in an “F” for the course.

Termination

The student must fully complete the internship hours and dates as specified in the Memorandum of Agreement. Not fulfilling the agreement schedule will result in an “F” for CMN 304, or the student will be allowed to withdraw.

A student may drop the Internship course in accordance with the policies of the University governing adding or dropping of courses. The student must notify the Internship Program Director or other faculty sponsor of their intention to do so. They must also notify their site supervisor that they will no longer be pursuing academic credit.

An internship provider may terminate an internship for any lawful reason. Upon termination, the site must provide promptly to the student and to the Internship Program Director a written statement of the reasons for the termination. If the termination of the internship is in no way related to the student's performance, and the student wishes to continue earning credit hours, the student and the Internship Program Director will agree on other arrangements for completion of academic work. If the termination of the internship is related to the student's performance, such as poor work or unethical or illegal behaviors, the student will receive a failing grade for the course.

If a student violates the rules or policies set by the Internship Program Director or faculty sponsor at the beginning of the program, including acts of academic dishonesty, a failing grade will be assigned and any other disciplinary measures appropriate to the situation will be pursued.

Faculty Sponsorship

In 99.9% of cases, Department of Communication interns work with the Internship Program Director as their faculty sponsor. However, students may choose to work with a faculty member of their choice in sponsoring their internship. The faculty member, of course, must be in agreement.

The student should be known by the faculty member (i.e., has been in class) and/or is interested in a related field of study or work as the professor. A student should only approach a faculty member for sponsorship if s/he already has secured an internship. It is at the faculty member's discretion on how to design the academic assignments required to assign a grade for CMN 304. As appropriate, assignments and other written materials related to an internship should document student learning and degree of progress toward articulated goals for the internship.

Submitting a proposal to the Department of Communication Internship Program means that the student has read and understood these eligibility and policy requirements and is prepared to enter into a formal agreement accordingly.