

Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice
University of South Carolina

INTERNSHIP MANUAL

INTRODUCTION

Internship experiences in the field of criminal justice serve multiple purposes. The criminal justice intern will develop self-directed learning skills, will gain a better understanding and appreciation of knowledge gained in the classroom, and will be exposed to and better understand the complexities of the criminal justice system. Toward that goal, the following is a list of goals and objectives of the criminal justice internship:

- A. To provide the criminal justice intern with insight into the day-to-day activities of criminal justice agencies and organizations and to provide a realistic perspective of the complex nature of such agencies and organizations;
- B. To provide the intern a greater appreciation of knowledge gained in the classroom and a realization of the importance of that knowledge as it applies to the administration of criminal justice;
- C. To provide the interning student with a sense of career orientation by creating a heightened sense of desire for their chosen field; and
- D. To enable the student to assess his/her skills and abilities against tasks of real-work situations.

Interning in criminal justice agencies and organizations may also serve to provide the student with connections for future employment opportunities, or simply help the intern decide on a specific area of interest. CRJU internships are **NOT** paid positions.

Internships provide all students with an opportunity to integrate academic studies with the day-to-day operations with a criminal justice agency or organization. During an internship, students are similar to employees of the agency or organization. They are assigned duties by their supervisor and are expected to relate to that supervisor as any employee would. While interns are not actual employees, supervisors do expect some return on their investment in students and do assign work that is beneficial to the agency/organization.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

To be eligible for an undergraduate criminal justice internship, a student must have completed a minimum of 75 university credits and should have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0. Students with less than a 3.0 GPA, but at least a 2.5 G.P.A. may still be considered for an internship. Students with a 2.5 to 2.9 GPA may apply for a waiver of the GPA requirement. Such requests will be dependent upon the demand for internships the semester that the student is requesting and approval by the internship director.

Students are required to have completed a minimum of 21 hours of CRJU, including the core courses, prior to being allowed to participate in an internship. If you have any questions regarding these core classes, please feel free to contact the internship director to clarify the exact requirements.

You must completely fill out the Internship Application and return the same to the Office of Student Services by the appropriate deadline. For Spring internships that deadline is October 15th, for Summer internships it is April 15th, and for Fall internships it is May 15th.

Many agencies, especially federal agencies and law enforcement organizations, do not allow students with criminal records to participate in internships. Further, for a number of federal agencies, a complete background check, including credit check, will be required. As such, having your application in on a timely basis, and beginning the process as quickly as possible is imperative.

HOW TO GET AN INTERNSHIP

A student's first step in getting an internship is to consider personal career aspirations. After making a general decision about the student's field of interest (i.e. corrections, courts, law enforcement, law, etc.), a student should start thinking about whether there may be a specific type of agency/organization in which the student wishes to work. This decision can often be complex and the student may not fully be aware of the possibilities available to her/him. If this occurs, the student should seek advice and information from the internship director.

After a student has made a decision on the type and location of an agency/organization in which to do an internship, the student should make an appointment to meet with the internship director to discuss the student's intentions. The internship director must approve potential agencies/organizations before any contact is made with that agency/organization.

After that meeting has occurred with the internship director, the student is to make contact with the agency/organization of interest. Occasionally, the internship director will initiate this contact, but in most instances this is the responsibility of the student. This initial contact should answer the following questions:

1. Does the agency/organization provide internship opportunities?
2. If not, would the agency/organization consider an internship program?
3. Are there any special conditions associated with the agency's/organization's internship program?
4. Would the agency/organization be willing to interview the student for an internship position? If so, an appointment for an interview should be scheduled.

The internship position interview is crucially important, and the student should be prepared to ask questions and to show genuine interest in the agency/organization. The student should wear appropriate professional attire for the interview.

After receiving a response from these preliminary contacts, the student should discuss what has happened with the internship director who will, in turn, contact the agency/organization to make final arrangements and commitments.

TYPES OF AGENCIES/ORGANIZATIONS

The types of agencies/organizations with which the student can do a CRJU internship are extensive and are decided, to a large extent, by the student. Typically, however, CRJU internships are done in the areas of courts, law enforcement agencies, corrections, law firms and victim rights organizations.

We are currently in the process of creating a database of potential agencies and organizations that will be available for internships. We will continue to expand that list as more become available. This list will be a good place to start, but, if the student has interest in an agency or organization that is NOT on the list, we will certainly look into the possibility of internships with that agency/organization.

PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF CRJU INTERNS

Agencies and organizations that host criminal justice internships place great emphasis on the need for confidentiality, privacy, and personal integrity. Therefore, for a student to successfully complete an internship with a criminal justice agency or organization, the student must be able to demonstrate high levels of maturity and integrity. Additionally, CRJU interns must possess the emotional stability necessary to deal with the kind of unpleasant situations that are occasionally encountered in the criminal justice system.

To facilitate good rapport with the chosen agency/organization, interns must also have good listening and interpersonal skills.

In addition to possessing these personality traits, all CRJU interns must abide by the following rules:

1. Always dress appropriately;
2. Do not use profanity, regardless of what others are doing;
3. Always be on time and do not leave early;
4. Do NOT allow yourself to be put into dangerous situations;
5. Do not become involved in office gossip;
6. Ask questions and show enthusiasm;
7. Do not discuss sensitive information with people outside your office;
8. Do not become argumentative or disrespectful; and
9. Be honest and forthright about any unusual situations.

All student interns are required to complete a minimum of 160 hours to earn 3 university credits. To keep track of your hours worked, you will use the "Verification of Hours" form and record your hours on a weekly basis. Your supervisor from the agency/organization must sign off each week on your hours worked. This form is mandatory.

Mutual Responsibilities:

The primary responsibility of the internship agency or organization is to permit the student to observe the central functions of the agency or organization. Other responsibilities of the internship agency or organization are to schedule student's work; to mentor and direct the student's work; to evaluate the student's work; and to ensure that the intern's experience is productive.

It is the responsibility of the student to immediately contact the internship director if the student believes that the agency is not fulfilling major programmatic responsibilities or if other issues arise that are deemed to be serious by the student. While no simple solutions exist for these type of problems, the internship director will work with the student to remedy the situation.

Conversely, should the student fail to fulfill his/her responsibilities, the internship may be terminated. Examples of infractions which may require action are: the student not showing up for assignments; the student engaging in behavior deemed inappropriate by the agency or organization; engaging in illegal or immoral behavior, as determined by the agency or organization; or not performing duties as requested by the agency or organization.

CONCLUSION

Internships give students the opportunity to work on enhancing their career goals by getting first-hand experience in their chosen field. It gives them the opportunity to determine if this is the type of work they wish to do. It also gives students an opportunity to build up contacts and start networking in their field.

As one of the goals of the internship is to help you transition to professional work life, you will be able to learn and implement those behaviors expected of professionals, including adherence to deadlines, conducting yourself in a professional manner with respect to dress and communication, and honoring commitments.

The assignments that are including with the internship program through the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice will further give you the opportunity to apply the knowledge you have gained, and the experiences you have had, into academic output for credit toward your degree.