



URBAN STUDIES PROGRAM
University of Pennsylvania
130 McNeil Building, 3718 Locust Walk
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6209
Phone: 215/898-6948 Fax: 215/573-2134
Email: urbs@sas.upenn.edu
<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/urban/>

Fieldwork Fact Sheet

Every student who decides to major or minor in Urban Studies is required to do an internship for credit. They are expected to spend about 15 hours per week at the internship site. In addition, students sign up for a double credit weekly seminar called "*Fieldwork*." The seminar is designed to help structure the internship learning experience. Currently, Urban Studies is the only undergraduate major at Penn which requires an internship.

This fact sheet is intended to help you determine your expectations for the kind of work interns will do.

What is the purpose of the Fieldwork internship?

The internship gives students an opportunity to see the connections between theory (what they have been learning in their classes) and practice by working closely with a community group, public agency, non-profit or private organization. The experience grounds students' academic learning and helps them clarify their interests and career directions. In our surveys of Urban Studies graduates, we ask them to list courses which have proven important to them in their current careers. They almost always cite the fieldwork internship as one of the most important parts of their undergraduate experience.

How do students choose sites?

Students choose a fieldwork site either because they are considering a career in the field or because they are interested in the substance of what the organization does and want to clarify their interests, professional goals, or possible area of graduate study. The Urban Studies Program maintains a resource guide listing various Philadelphia agencies that may be interested in hosting student interns. Agencies request to have their information included in this database by completing a form provided by the Urban Studies office. Students are not limited to the agencies listed in the database, however, and may choose any area site that interests them.

What kinds of assignments do students do for the fieldwork class?

We expect students to be self-conscious about what they are learning through their internship and to be able to articulate and demonstrate their learning. They develop a learning plan with three kinds of goals: knowledge, skills, and normative, which they revise half way through the internship. Students choose the two goals that best demonstrate what they learned in the internship to present in the final "portfolio." The portfolio also includes an ethnography, history, and management analysis of the organization as well as a bibliography and academic essay. Most of the interns keep a journal, which they use to illustrate arguments in their portfolios. Each student makes a presentation on one of their learning plan goals to the whole class at the end of the semester.

What kinds of activities do we envision interns doing in the sites?

Students should become involved in the substance of the organization's work. Successful models include assisting a particular staff member in all aspects of his/her work or working on a project that crosses departments and roles within the organization. Interns can provide needed help to assist with ongoing or new projects related to the organization's mission. From time to time, the intern may want to interview various staff members or even individuals from outside of the organization in order to do one of the seminar assignments.

We understand that sometimes you will expect interns to do routine work, as everyone in a workplace does, but such work should not be the primary focus of an intern's responsibilities.

How are students' grades determined and what is the role of the supervisor?

In reviewing students' written assignments, we are looking for students to show they understand the organization's mission, how it operates, and its role within a larger context. In the final portfolios, we like to see: 1) demonstration of progress or development over time, 2) ability to articulate and attain specific goals, 3) demonstration of the link between learning in the internship experience and academic theory or analysis, and 4) demonstration of an understanding of the organization, its workings and historical and institutional context.

The internship supervisor contributes to assessing a student in two ways. The first is by your responses to questions on the supervisor evaluation form about the students' work and your satisfaction. The other way in which the supervisor plays a role in the student's grade is in creating good learning opportunities for students. The richness of the internship experience is reflected in the quality of the essays students hand in. At the end of the term, the supervisor is asked to provide feedback to the Urban Studies instructor by evaluating the student intern's work. The instructor takes this supervisor evaluation into consideration when computing the student's final course grade.

Why are student intern positions not paid?

Urban Studies majors and minors receive 2 units of academic credit for their participation in the required course. This course has two components: 1) A 15 hour per week internship and 2) attendance and participation in a weekly seminar. The policy of the university is that activities students undertake as an educational experience, such as the internship, should not be paid. Essentially, students should not be paid for an activity they are getting academic credit for. This policy echoes federal Department of Labor guidelines on unpaid internships. Although the agency receives some benefit from having an intern on site, that is outweighed by the learning experience of the student. From the Urban Studies Program's point of view, subsidies for transportation or other expenses that the student incurs in carrying out the internship are allowable.

Are agencies liable for student interns?

With regard to liability, the agency does not assume liability for the student doing an unpaid internship. University legal counsel states that when an internship is an academic requirement (as is the case in the Urban Studies Program), Penn's Office of Risk Management covers the student for liability. If necessary, that office would issue a certificate to satisfy an agency's human resources department on this point.

We would be happy to talk with you further if you have any questions or would like consultation on the internship.

EMAIL QUESTIONS TO: ESIMON@SAS.UPENN.EDU