



## Department of Communication

# Questions and Answers About the Communication Internship at Westfield State University.

### **1. What is an internship?**

An internship is college course, for us, COMM 305. As such it comes with academic expectations and a role for a Faculty Sponsor who awards a grade.

It is also a real-world working experience where you learn more about a career in an industry and the types of jobs that industry offers.

It is a learning experience where you will apply what you have learned at WSU and gain new knowledge, experience and skills in your internship setting.

### **2. When should I start thinking about an internship?**

Your freshman year. Many of our sites are very competitive. They want the best students and have many colleges that send them potential interns. Work hard to maintain a strong GPA. Get involved in campus organizations. For example, if you want an internship at a newspaper and you spent four years at Westfield and didn't write for the college paper, the site supervisor will wonder why.

### **3. Why should I do an internship?**

Employers are always looking for candidates who have experience and, often, a portfolio of work. Here are a few other reasons.

- Find out more about the field
- Develop new marketable skills
- Meet new contacts
- Find possible references
- Develop a portfolio

- Get a job

#### **4. When can I do an internship?**

During the fall semester, spring semester, or summer sessions.

#### **5. When is the best time to do an internship?**

The later in your WSU career, the better. Students who have taken more Communication courses bring more skills and knowledge to the job and make a stronger impression. In addition, students in their last semester of the senior year find the best potential to be hired at your internship site, because you can start the job right away after graduation.

#### **6. Can any Communication major do an internship?**

To participate in an internship, you must fill out the departmental internship application, which is reviewed by the faculty. All full-time Communication majors who are at least Juniors or Seniors are eligible to apply. However, the following qualifying criteria are in place.

- Be at Junior or Senior status
- Have completed the Common Core
- Have a minimum overall WSU GPA of 2.5
- Have a Communication major GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Have completed 30 credits of Communication courses
- Have demonstrated maturity and [professionalism](#) in classes and other interactions
- Have attended the mandatory internship Workshop or taken the qualifying test.

If a student does not meet any of the above requirements, there is room on the application form to explain why the requirement(s) should be waived.

#### **7. Do I have to pay for internship credits?**

During the regular school year, for full-time students, the internship is part of your regular tuition. During summer sessions you must register and pay for the credits through the College of Graduate and Continuing Education. Both options require the same application and departmental approval.

## **8. How do I get started in the process?**

Attend a session of the Communication Internship Workshop, held each semester. The session in the fall is for spring semester internships, the spring session is for summer or fall. Attendance at the meeting is **required** if you wish to do an internship. If you do not attend, you will be required to complete an exam about the internship program based on this FAQ. The exam will be offered approximately six weeks after the Internship Workshop. Your application will not be considered until you have completed either the Workshop or the exam.

## **9. I'm not sure yet if I want to do an internship. Am I obligated to do one if I change my mind?**

You are not obligated to do an internship, but you can't do one if you don't apply. So, apply!

- Apply to us even if you're not sure yet
- There is no penalty for changing your mind
- There are no negative consequences of not finding an internship. You simply take a normal load of courses.
- Sign up for courses, just in case (all students should do this)
- Ask for the full 15 credits if you don't know

## **10. How do I apply?**

Applications are made via the Communication Department web site at [com.westfield.ma.edu](http://com.westfield.ma.edu) Applications are accepted after the Internship Workshop until the week before finals.

## **11. How many hours do I work at the internship per credit?**

You must work at your internship for 120 hours for each 3 credits That translates to 8 hours a week. See the table below for other internship hours/credits requirements.

8 hours x 15 weeks = 120 hours = 3 credits

16 hours x 15 weeks = 240 hours = 6 credits

24 hours x 15 weeks = 360 hours = 9 credits

32 hours x 15 weeks = 480 hours = 12 credits

40 hours x 15 weeks = 600 hours = 15 credits

**12. Do internship credits count as Concentration elective credits?**

No, but they are applied to graduation credits as general electives.

**13. Is there a maximum amount of internship credits permitted by the university?**

Yes. Fifteen (15) lifetime. You can do combinations. For instance, 6 credits one semester and 9 the next. Or, even two separate internships in the same semester.

**14. Do I need to get my formal application approval before I start looking for an internship site?**

No. If you meet the basic requirements outlined earlier, you should assume you are going to be approved and start looking for a site right away. Getting an internship can be competitive and there is no penalty for being an early applicant.

**15. How do I find an internship site?**

Finding a site is your responsibility, however we can give you lots of help.

- The Internship Coordinator maintains a database of previous sites going back a decade or more. Every Comm major can see this listing.
- The Internship Coordinator receives tips about new internship sites on a regular basis, many of which are not in the database.
- Online resources include [indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com), and the [Career Center Handshake](#) listing, which has sites all over the state and even the country.
- Find a new site on your own. Try doing a web search for items like “Public relations Framingham” to find PR firms in the Framingham area. Be creative with your search terms. Then, just call them up on the phone, introduce yourself as a WSU Communication major and ask if they accept interns. If they don’t, thank them and move on. If they do, they will tell

you what procedure to follow. Don't be afraid of cold calling, in PR or Journalism you'll do a lot of it!

### **16. Does a site have to have taken WSU interns before?**

No. Students find new sites all the time. The Internship Coordinator can tell you if the site is suitable. The main issue is that the site should have a mentor who can teach you the skills you're there for. A site where you just figure out what to do on your own would not be acceptable.

### **17. How do I apply to a site?**

Finding an internship site is much like looking for a job. You contact a site and apply, usually with a cover letter and resume. They will probably also want to schedule an interview with you. (The [WSU Career Center](#) can provide assistance in creating your resume, as well as lots of help with interview preparation.)

### **18. Can I apply to more than one site?**

Yes. However, once you have informed one site that you will be interning there, it is unprofessional to cancel out in favor of another site. Don't commit until you have made your final choice.

### **19. How will I be graded?**

The Internship Coordinator will assign you a Faculty Sponsor during the first week or your internship. Your sponsor will award your final letter grade. The grade will be determined by the site supervisor's evaluation, your progress in achieving your learning objectives (as stated in your Internship Contract – see question 20), and success in completing additional work (such as a bi-weekly log) as assigned by your sponsor. Yes, you can do extremely well at a site but get an abysmal grade by not following your sponsor's directions. Consider your sponsor's requirements as class assignments. They are not optional.

### **20. Are there assignments?**

Each Faculty Sponsor will have their own requirements. However, all interns must submit the following documents to their Faculty Sponsor:

- Internship Contract to your sponsor (by the end of the first two weeks of work)

- Intern's midterm report
- Site Supervisor's midterm report
- Intern's final report
- Site Supervisor's final report
- A Site Report

### **21. Will there be a site visit?**

Time and geography permitting, your Faculty Sponsor may visit your site. If so, this is a brief visit designed to help the sponsor understand the location and the personalities involved. The visit is scheduled in advance at a time that is convenient to you, your site supervisor and your sponsor. You should be there during the visit, but allow your

### **22. Can I get paid for my internship experience?**

Yes. But it is totally up to the site. Some sites offer a small stipend or hourly wage, some don't. It makes no difference to your internship status with WSU.

### **23. What if my internship goes bad through no fault of my own? For instance, what about sexual harassment?**

Sadly, federal rules regarding OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) and sexual harassment often are not in place because they apply to "employees" which you are usually not, as an intern. However most reputable firms will treat interns with the same respect and concern as regular employees. Such violations are extremely rare with our interns.

But if you are sexually harassed (or belittled or abused in some other way) DO NOT FEEL you are trapped. If a job site becomes unbearable, we will help you. Don't worry about losing the credits or getting a bad grade. We'll find an alternative.

The Internship Coordinator will make every effort to solve on-site problems. If the problems cannot be resolved, then an alternate site or assignment will be determined.

## A Step-by-Step Look at the Internship Process

- You complete the Internship Workshop or take the qualifying exam in order to be considered.
- You fill out [the online form](#) after the Workshop concludes and before the end of the semester. Do not fill the application out earlier!
- The Communication faculty meets to approve applicants on a rolling basis. Our goal is to give you an approval or rejection within one week of your application being posted.
- Students meeting minimum requirements are almost always approved.
- You are notified of your approval, rejection or modification
- After you find a site, you submit an [Internship Registration](#) (PDF) form to the Internship Coordinator. You CAN NOT register for an internship on your own. Only the Internship Coordinator can register you.
- On that form you will indicate courses that you will be dropping to accommodate the internship. (For instance, you will drop two 3 credit courses to accommodate a 6-credit internship.)
- The Internship Coordinator assigns you a Faculty Sponsor during the first two weeks of your internship
- During your internship you will work with your faculty sponsor who will keep track of your progress

## Summer Exceptions

- We meet to approve you at same time as Fall candidates – after the spring Workshop.
- There is a cost for CGCE summer classes, financial aid may be available.
- When you locate an internship site, there is [a CGCE form](#) on our website that needs signatures from the faculty sponsor, and the chair.
- The completed CGCE form is given to the CGCE which notifies you when you can register.
- You still must submit the Internship Registration form to the Internship Coordinator once you have found a position.
- You can register for either Summer I or II.
- A sponsor is assigned.