

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PACKET

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Rationale for Professional Practice in Geography

Professional practice (internship or cooperative education) ideally gives the student a chance to apply what he or she has learned in the classroom; to test skills, facts, and theories; to evaluate existing professional competencies; and to make plans to fill gaps that reveal themselves. Students often gain from exposure to state-of-the-art methodology and modern equipment. Students provide feedback to the Department of Geography-Geology thus enabling the faculty to improve the Geography programs for upcoming majors and minors. Sometimes a student may even decide, after a professional practice experience, that he or she does not really desire a career like those encountered in the agency or firm. This outcome is, of course, also useful. In many cases, however, the experience will lead directly or indirectly to a first job in the field of the student's choice.

Description of Courses

Both the internship and the cooperative education experience (co-op) involve planned, supervised professional experience in a public or private organization. Students may earn from one to 16 semester credit hours. They may apply up to 16 hours toward the 120-hour requirement for graduation and up to four toward the major requirement in Geography. A GPA (grade point average) of at least 2.0/4.0 is necessary for enrollment in professional practice.

Internship (GEO 398.01)

Most internships serve as a capstone experience for the student and typically occur near the end of the senior year. Students must have at least 100 semester hours prior to enrollment, and they earn one hour of academic credit for every 40 hours of work in the agency or firm. Interns often receive pay, but employers may remunerate them in other ways, e.g., carfare or housing. Students may do internships more than once and in different locations.

Co-op (GEO 398.51)

The co-op arrangement usually begins earlier in the student's academic career than the internship. Co-ops enable a student to alternate professional practice with on-campus study. A student must have earned at least 45 hours before beginning a co-op, and he or she then earns one hour of credit for every 120 hours spent at the agency or firm. Co-op students must receive a wage or salary.

Website

Visit lilt.ilstu.edu/mdsuble/internshipwelcome.htm for more details and employer comments. The Department's coordinator updates on an annual schedule.

Placement in Professional Practice

The availability of internships and co-ops varies from term to term. For openings beyond the Twin Cities, students will usually need a vehicle or need to live in the vicinity of the agency or firm.

Information about hundreds of potential internships and co-ops is available from the Geography Professional Practice Coordinator. We also encourage students to discover new positions and to make a case for placement to the departmental coordinator.

Student Responsibilities

Although a student may speak or correspond informally with an employer about the possibility of securing a professional practice slot, students must follow the formal application procedure outlined below. Some exceptions occur regarding item 4.

1. Complete a list of realistic goals for the professional practice experience.
2. Prepare an acceptable resume. Form 1 provides a sample resume format.
3. Compose a cover letter to the agency or firm.
4. Submit the resume and cover letter to the departmental coordinator prior to any appropriate departmental deadline. The departmental coordinator will then prepare a cover letter for the applications (cover letters and resumes) received and send all to the agency or firm.
5. If a positive response comes from an agency or firm, arrange an interview in person, if possible, or by telephone, if not.
6. After consultation with the departmental coordinator, write letters of acceptance and rejection to appropriate agencies and firms.
7. Complete (with the assistance of the on-site supervisor) Form 2 and Form 3, and return three (3) copies of both forms to the departmental coordinator, who will see that copies of Form 2 and Form 3 reach the parties involved.
8. Sign and deliver the Waiver of Liability (Form 4) to the departmental coordinator.
9. Submit copies of logbook entries to the departmental coordinator on a regular basis. FAX submissions are acceptable, if the output is legible.
10. Submit a final report to the coordinator.

On-Site Supervisor Responsibilities

During the period that the student participates in the experience, the on-site supervisor should do the following.

1. Meet with the student at least weekly (but daily is even better) to discuss what has happened and determine the proper course of action.
2. Allow the student to progress at a rate that is in the best interest of the student and the agency or firm.
3. Keep the coordinator apprised of the student's progress.
4. Submit the completed supervisor evaluation (Form 6) to the coordinator in a timely fashion.

Departmental Coordinator Responsibilities

After the student has begun his or her professional practice experience, the coordinator should do as follows.

1. Talk with the student whenever possible.
2. Telephone or visit the agency or firm and discuss the student's progress with the supervisor.
3. Review logbook entries as they arrive, and provide periodic feedback.
4. Send Form 6 to the on-site supervisor prior to the end of the term.
5. Evaluate the student's final report.
6. Submit the course grade to the University.

Evaluation

The coordinator determines a student's grade based upon the on-site supervisor's evaluation of the student (Form 6); a daily log of activities (Form 5), which the student gives (or sends) every other week to the coordinator; and a final report about the experience, which the student must give to the coordinator not later than the last day of classes in the term for which the student has registered.

The final report should contain (1) the name of the agency or firm; (2) name of the supervisor; and (3) a description of the mission of the agency or firm, of the insights gained, of any problems that developed, and of the background or skills found to be useful or acquired during the experience. Place special emphasis on the insights and skills section. Students should approximate a good term paper with their final report. A recapitulation of the daily logbook is inappropriate. As is the case with other forms and papers, the Department retains the final report.

NAME

Address (campus):

Phone: ()

Email:

Address (permanent):

Phone: ()

Email:

Internship Objective:

Long-Range Objective:

Summary:

Educational Background (reverse chronological order):

Work Experience (reverse chronological order or emphasis on key positions):

Related Courses or Skills: (Include courses or skills related to the type of professional practice experience you want.)

Activities, honors, interests:

UNDERSTANDING

The purpose of this educational and practical experience is to provide the student with an opportunity to apply, to validate, and to enhance concepts and theories learned in the classroom. At the same time, the student must perform activities of value to the agency or firm.

Other understandings include the following:

1. The training will begin on _____, 20____, and terminate on _____, 20____.
2. The training shall consist of an average minimum of _____ hours per week at times scheduled by the on-site supervisor. The University will award _____ semester hours of credit for the successful completion of the professional practice training.
3. The supervisor will make an evaluation of the student's performance. The coordinator will incorporate this evaluation in determining the grade for the course.
4. The student recognizes that termination of this understanding on his or her part requires the approval of the coordinator.
5. The supervisor will not dismiss the student without prior discussion of such dismissal with the coordinator and with the student.
6. Whenever possible, the student will not remain in any one operation, job, or activity beyond the period wherein such experience is of educational value.
7. The student is responsible for maintaining satisfactory personal conduct; appropriate dress; and satisfactory behavior, including working when scheduled, during the period of the experience.

8. The student will complete all forms and written work required in this course, including the keeping of a daily logbook and the writing of a final report about the training experience.
9. Either the on-site supervisor or the coordinator, for just and reasonable cause, may terminate this experience, after having given a notice of at least five working days.
10. Prior to the beginning of the training period, the student, the on-site supervisor, and the departmental coordinator shall agree upon the content of the training experience (Form 3).
11. If monetary compensation is appropriate, it shall be at the rate of _____ per _____. Other compensation (specify):

Name

Date

_____ (Student) _____

_____ (On-Site Supervisor) _____

_____ (Departmental Coordinator at) _____
Illinois State
University

SYLLABUS OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Term and Year _____

Student's Name _____

Soc. Sec. # _____

Agency/Firm Name _____

Agency/Firm Address _____

On-Site Supervisor _____

Agency/Firm Phone _____ Student Personal Phone _____

Agency/Firm FAX _____ Supervisor Email _____

Experience Begins (Date) _____ Experience Ends (Date) _____

Average Hrs. Per Week to be Spent in the Experience _____

Number of Credits to be Earned _____

Schedule for the Experience
(Indicate Days of the Week and Hours) _____

ANTICIPATED ACTIVITIES (PLEASE COMPLETE CAREFULLY)

1.

2.

3.

4.

PLEASE USE ADDITIONAL PAGES AS NEEDED FOR OTHER ACTIVITIES

WAIVER OF LIABILITY

I, _____ (print name), being eighteen (18) years of age or older, do hereby affirm and swear:

1. I willfully and freely assume complete responsibility for any injuries, physical or mental, which I might sustain by participating in the Professional Practice Program.
2. I have made provision (either myself or through my parents) to have medical insurance sufficient to cover any medical obligations.
3. I assume all obligations for payment of state and federal taxes.
4. I assume all obligations for complying with all current financial aid regulations (see Financial Aid Office).
5. I acknowledge that if driving is a part of this assignment, I will maintain a current driver's license and insurance.
6. I understand that participation in Professional Practice does not entitle me to unemployment compensation at the end of the work term.
7. I understand that it is my responsibility to arrange for registration for the following school term.
8. I assume responsibility for applying for refund of fees if I am eligible as a result of my participation in Professional Practice.
9. I will hold Illinois State University harmless and not liable for any injury that may befall me as a result of my participation in the Professional Practice Program, except an injury that I may sustain as a direct result of a willful or negligent act of an employee or agent of Illinois State University.

Signed _____

Date _____

SAMPLE LOGBOOK FORMAT

Name _____

DAY/DATE:

ENTRY TITLE:

Write about what you did and provide your reactions to those activities.

ON-SITE SUPERVISOR EVALUATION

Instructions: To help us evaluate the student, please complete the following.

Student's Name: _____

Agency/Firm: _____

Duties: Briefly describe duties performed.

Please comment on the following.

1. Sense of responsibility to the work and to the experience: punctuality, willingness, seriousness of purpose.

2. Ability to learn and to perform well and promptly the duties assigned without undue supervision.

3. Personal relationships with fellow workers.

4. Ability to organize material and to present it orally or in writing (if applicable).

5. Understanding of agency or firm organization and environment.

6. Other comments and summary evaluation, including a suggested grade level--A, B, C, D, F.

Signature of On-Site Supervisor _____

Return by _____ to Michael D. Sublett, Department of Geography-Geology, Illinois State University, Campus Box 4400, Normal, IL 61790-4400.

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