

Academic Internship Policy

(Approved 4/19/2022)

Academic internships and other community-based experiential learning opportunities including community-based (service) learning are high impact practices that promote student connections, deep learning, and civic engagement. The University recognizes the beneficial educational purpose of student internships and community-based learning, as well as the need to maximize the educational experience while mitigating the risks to participants and minimizing the university's liability exposure. This policy sets forth the campus guidelines for facilitating internship opportunities for students, in accordance with CSU Policy. Community-based (service) learning guidelines are addressed in a separate policy.

Internships that allow students to earn academic credit must meet credit hour and faculty-workload standards – see the [Course Classification Guide \(.pdf\)](#) – related to required hours and additional pedagogical and risk-management standards required by the California State University system and CSUN. The provost or designee will have oversight. Each College is responsible for maintaining data that will assure compliance with current academic standards, risk-management, and audit policies.

Policy

I. Definitions

- A. For the purposes of this policy Academic Internship refers to academic internships enrolled in for credit at either the undergraduate or graduate level.
- B. Academic Internships are one category of classes in which experience is the predominant teaching-learning mode and includes applied and practical experiences that are linked to students' academic study and professional preparation. This faculty-approved and -facilitated experience will normally be in organizations other than the academic departments offering the courses. These courses will include significant involvement of students and faculty in planning, processing and evaluating the learning resulting from these experiences. Normally, undergraduate Academic Internship courses will be at the upper division-level.

C. For the purpose of hours and unit requirement related to this policy, Academic Internships will not include supervised student teaching, required work in credential pathways, or clinical experiences (the specific nomenclature of that is determined by the accrediting or licensing agency which regulates the profession). Programs excluded through this provision must comply with credit-hour standards, risk-management and audit policy.

D. This policy will also apply to academic internships that take place on campus, although a Site Assessment and a Campus-Partner agreement will not be necessary in such cases.

E. Academic Internships may be paid or unpaid. A stipend is considered unpaid.

II. Risk Management and Oversight

A. Given that internships are academically-related, credit-bearing professional experiences, oversight of internship policy is vested in the Division of Academic Affairs under the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, or designee.

B. Each Dean or designee is responsible for ensuring that Departments within their College meet the requirements of the policy and all CSU and University risk management procedures.

C. College/Department procedures must be consistent with University policies and overall best practices in managing internships, and must include:

1. Establishment of a signed Internship Agreement between the University and the Internship site (Partner) that addresses both the internship site's and the campus's role in the internship.
2. Prior to placement, assessment of the appropriateness of an internship site including:
 - i. The potential for the internship site to provide an educationally appropriate experience.
 - ii. Identification of the potential risks of the internship site, including criteria by which site visits are required.
 - iii. Identification of an appropriate individual from the host organization to supervise the student at the internship site.
 - iv. Evaluation of the educational environment.
 - v. Evaluation of the potential for student academic experience and its relationship to the student's academic study.
 - vi. Site visit when risk assessment cannot be satisfactorily completed through other means.

3. An annual review of academic internships, including both educational and safety issues, considering information from on-site supervisors, faculty, university staff, and student experience.

III. Course Elements

A. Academic Internships will include the following elements:

1. Identified relationship to the academic discipline(s) offering the course.
2. Screening or selection procedures for students seeking to enroll in these courses, which will be designated as restricted.
3. An orientation that includes experiential learning concepts, conduct expectations, health and safety information, anti-discrimination and harassment policy, and emergency contacts, and identifies if the student's academic internship is paid or unpaid.
4. In addition to a syllabus, a written learning agreement accepted by the student, faculty member and on-site supervisor describing the rules and regulations, activities, learning processes, and evaluation methods used in the course, and that specifies the steps students should take to resolve conflicts around internship conditions.
5. Accommodation plan for students with special needs or who cannot complete the placement due to problems with the internship site or sponsoring organization.
6. Emergency response plan, including completion and collection of student emergency contact information.
7. Facilitation of student learning by the CSUN instructor during the on-going experience.

B. At minimum, student performance will be evaluated by the instructor at the middle and end of the semester. Input from the on-site supervisor is advisable.

C. Students will be required to evaluate the quality of the field experiences.

IV. Credit and Grading

A. Academic credit will be granted upon the faculty member's determination of student learning. This process for final determination of academic credit will be defined in the learning agreement and may include contributions by the student and on-site supervisor.

B. Normally, students' performances in Academic Internships will be evaluated on a Credit/No Credit basis. For new courses, upon justification by the academic department and approval by the Educational Policies Committee

(EPC) or the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), a different basis of grading may be added.

C. Academic Internship credit will not be granted after the fact or for prior life experience.

V. Internship Hours and Units (See I C for exemptions)

A. A minimum of 12 hours of contact between the student and CSUN faculty is required per academic internship.

B. Typically, 45 student hours per unit per semester is expected and more may not be required without approval of EPC or GSC.

C. Typically, a maximum of 3 units of internship credit is permitted per semester.

D. Typically, a program may count no more than 6 units of Academic Internship course credit toward an undergraduate major. Upon justification by the Department, EPC or GSC may allow up to a total of 12 units in the program. A student may count no more than 12 units of Academic Internship course credit toward a baccalaureate degree.

VI. Course Designation

Departments may not offer Academic Internships under a 499, 599, 699, or 799 designation as Independent Study. Departments seeking new internship courses for the first time should use the 494, 594, 694, or 794 designation, if available.

VII. Nondiscrimination

The University and the participating organizations will adhere to all current CSUN and CSU system nondiscrimination policies.