



Intern Development & Meeting Topics

For Faculty Internship Supervisors

Stages of Intern Development

The following information regarding the stages of development for an intern is adapted from *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional and Civic Development in Experiential Learning* (Sweitzer & King, 2014). It is important for faculty supervisors to understand the developmental stages of an internship to support their student through what is a common progression of confidence, learning and participation for most interns.

At the University of Portland, we call these four stages: Anticipation, Exploration, Contribution, and Culmination. As students navigate and familiarize themselves with a new professional work environment, their self-confidence and abilities will develop over time. However, they will need your support and encouragement on this journey as they apply classroom theories to real world contexts. There are additional requirements of you as the faculty supervisor if you are supervising an internship for academic credit. Requirements are listed in the document below at each stage.

As you supervise interns for credit, consider the career competencies they are learning at their professional work-setting. For new college graduates, career readiness is key to ensuring successful entrance into the workforce. There are eight career readiness competencies defined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)¹, each of which can be demonstrated in a variety of ways. Review a definition of each competency at the link below as well as download supplemental materials to support and incorporate into your initiatives.

- Career & Self-Development
- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Equity & Inclusion
- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Teamwork
- Technology

Please share the companion handout with your advisee: *Intern Tips for Students: A Guide to Making the Most of your Internship Experience*.

Stage One: Anticipation

When the student first secures the internship, they will likely feel excitement, high motivation, and have idealistic expectations. There may also feel some anxiety and self-doubt: “*What if I can’t connect with my coworkers? What if I can’t handle projects? How will I manage work-life balance? What if my supervisor thinks I know more than I actually do?*” Once they start their internship, they might feel overloaded with a lot of information, while simultaneously feel underutilized and underwhelmed by routine tasks.

By completing a Learning Agreement on Handshake, the intern will develop more realistic expectations about how their learning goals can be accomplished through the duties assigned to them during the internship. A faculty supervisor can assist in empowering the student to take an active role in problem solving and developing or refining the internship goals and communicating those with their internship site supervisor early on.

¹ Courtesy of NACE: <https://www.nacweb.org/uploadedfiles/files/2021/resources/nace-career-readiness-competencies-revised-apr-2021.pdf>

At UP:

In addition to working with the Academic Internship Coordinator and the Career Education Center, students may also reach out to a faculty member to help secure the internship. Listed below are ways that you can assist in easing the student through the arrangement—and anticipation stage—of an internship. Once a student secures an internship, they can register for academic credit.

1. Help the student identify their strengths, skills, values, career interests and opportunities for growth. This will help them determine what skills and competencies they would like to gain out of an internship experience.
2. Help the student gain confidence that they can complete an internship by outlining examples of areas of strengths. Remind them that class projects *do* count as related experience and they do not need to know everything to be a good candidate. Employers know that interns will both learn *and* contribute.
3. Encourage the student to reach out to the Academic Internship Coordinator for CAS, or the Career Education Center to schedule an appointment to create an individualized Internship Search plan.
4. Help the student craft their learning goals related to the job duties of the internship, yet specific to what they hope to gain from the experience. Learning goals can be related to knowledge development, skill development, and career exploration and development.
5. Encourage the student to ask a lot of questions and be patient with the overwhelm of a steep learning curve as they get to know the organization. This may be the first time they have navigated a workplace identity.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS: If you supervise an internship for credit, you will need to approve the student's learning agreement on Handshake. Once the student completes their learning agreement, you will receive an automated email asking you to approve the internship for credit. In addition, you will need to create a syllabus for the internship course. The Academic Internship Coordinator can share the CAS Suggested Syllabus template to help you get started.

Stage Two: Exploration

A few weeks into the internship, it is common for interns to feel like things are generally under control. It is normal for students to feel curious, open, unsure, and underwhelmed/overwhelmed. Help the intern realize that this is a typical adjustment period that *all* new professionals experience. Differences between work and school become clear: there isn't the same flexibility of scheduling, the initial work may not be very exciting or challenging, there are no chances of incompletes, and there are serious consequences for being late or not completing the work tasks.

A faculty supervisor can encourage strategies that will establish the intern's competence and confidence such as requesting regular meetings with their supervisor, conducting informational interviews with colleagues, and approaching their workload with an upbeat attitude. You may need to encourage the intern to advocate for themselves if they are not engaging in tasks related to their original position description or helping them to meet their learning goals. Empower them to take initiative to get what *they* want out of the experience!

At UP:

The orientation process is often a time of discord or stress for interns as they are adjusting to a new environment and absorbing a lot of information. In addition, the employer may not yet be fully confident in the intern's abilities. This time period usually coincides with the first few meetings between a faculty member and an intern. This stage is a pivotal time in the intern's development, as the intern develops an understanding of how their work expectations may be different from when they first began the internship. In addition, the intern is recognizing the many differences that exist between academic and professional life and may have emotional reactions to these differences.

Topics for meeting discussion may include:



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1. Discuss if the intern and internship site supervisor have set regular check-in meetings and have reviewed the internship learning agreement. If they have not yet done so, recommend the importance of setting regularly scheduled meetings to ease through the transition and to make sure that they are on the same page with their internship site supervisor.
2. What is the organizational culture at the internship site like?
 - How are decisions made typically?
 - How are decisions communicated to employees?
 - How are employees recognized for exceptional or below average work?
 - How do departments interact with one another?
 - How do managers communicate with employees?
 - What are five key words or phrases that best describe your internship organization?
 - What are five key words or phrases that best describe your experience so far?
 - What are the orientation/onboarding processes that you have experienced so far?
3. What is the staffing and organizational design at the internship site? Where do you, the intern, fit on the organizational totem pole? Can you draw the organizational chart of the company?
4. What types of activities are you looking forward to after the orientation period? What types of knowledge about the organization will be helpful in completing these activities?
5. What type of coping strategies are you using during this orientation/training period? How are you dealing with processing enormous amount of information?

Stage Three: Contribution

In the Contribution Stage (roughly the halfway mark of the internship), the intern has more of an established workplace identity and new level of productivity within their organization. Interns feel accomplished, excited, independent, invested in the work, and more able to confront challenges. They may be more confident and self-aware as they are given more responsibilities from the supervisor, and ideally, they feel integrated into the work group.

Faculty supervisors can help the intern assess expectations, identify new and realistic goals, and reflect on skills already learned. You may need to encourage the intern to advocate for themselves if they are not engaging in tasks related to their original position description or helping them to meet their learning goals. Empower them to take initiative to get what they want out of the experience, and to seek supervisor feedback to identify areas for continued development.

At UP:

Oftentimes in this stage, the intern forgets what it was like at the beginning and fails to recognize how far they have come in their professional development. It is important for the intern to track and document their contributions so they can remember their achievements and later be able to incorporate these experiences onto the resume and in future interviews. Help them reflect on what they are learning about their career interests based on this applied experience.

Topics for mid-point meeting discussion may include:

1. Expectations and reality:

- How has the organization compared to their expectations? What are the unwritten values or norms that you've learned about the workplace?
- Take a look at the learning goals you set for yourself at the beginning of the internship. Which of these has been met, not met, or is in process? Do you feel proud of what you've accomplished, disappointed in what you thought you'd be doing but haven't yet, or a combo of the two?
- In general, would you say the tasks you have been given so far have over-challenged you, under-challenged you, or been about right?
- Prepare the intern for a feeling of "burn out" that inevitably occurs during the eighth or ninth week of the internship. At this point, students often feel a hardship of balancing internship work, school-work and personal responsibilities or interests. Discuss how the intern may be best able to manage their time through this period.

2. Growth:

- What are some connections you have made between class material/theories we have studied, and your experience at your internship site?
- Which of your strengths are becoming apparent as effective tools in this internship and why? What affirms you in this role?
- How is your confidence level now compared to the start of the internship?
- How are you growing professionally through challenges that you've faced in this role?

3. Professional relationships:

- Have you and your supervisor disagreed yet? If so, how did that happen? How did it make you feel? How was it resolved?
- Who is a colleague or two that you could arrange an informational interview with to hear about their career journey and get advice for entering this field/organization? Talk through questions the student could ask them.

4. Contributions:

- How does your role, within this organization, impact the greater needs of the community?
- What is your most notable contribution to the organization so far?
- Is there any duty, goal or project that you are not progressing well on? How can I help you to organize your time so that you feel confident in completing this project or task?
- How are you keeping track of what you've worked on during this internship? Portfolio? A list? Remind the intern that their achievements and projects are professional experiences to include on their resume and in future interviews.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS: As part of an internship for academic credit, the Academic Internship Coordinator will reach out to internship site supervisors for a mid-point check-in. The Academic internship Coordinator will share all comments from the internship site supervisor with you.

Stage Four: Culmination

As the internship wraps up, during the Culmination Stage, it is normal for interns to feel proud, confident, sad, unfinished; often experiencing mixed emotions. Creating closure may be difficult for the intern, and the site does not always facilitate it fluidly. Some interns leave with a sense that they "didn't matter," others leave feeling that they can't get the assignments completed, and others feel extremely fulfilled regarding the amount of work that they accomplished. This is where the value of setting learning goals prior and during the internship becomes most evident.

Faculty supervisors can help interns through the transition by helping them identify and articulate what they



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learned and accomplished *and* help them see connections to future coursework. Encourage the intern to seek career advice, a future reference and/or a letter of recommendation from the supervisor. As the intern should have been documenting their contributions throughout their experience, remind them to update their resume while the internship is recent. The Career Education Center can help with resumes!

At UP:

This is a satisfying stage in an intern's development as they have come to see the full application of their work during the internship. It is important to recognize the high level of satisfaction experienced by interns upon completion of the internship and create an environment of festivity/celebration around these accomplishments.

Topics for meeting discussion may include:

1. Growth and Contributions:

- Revisit the original goals set out at the beginning of the internship and reflect upon the ways in which the intern accomplished these goals. What are your plans for working on those goals which they did not achieve during the internship?
- Help the intern identify which NACE competencies they have developed and demonstrated during their internship:
 - Career & Self-Development
 - Communication
 - Critical Thinking
 - Equity & Inclusion
 - Leadership
 - Professionalism
 - Teamwork
 - Technology
- What are the new skills, strengths, knowledge, insights and interests that you have learned during the internship?
- Review the internship supervisor's final evaluation together: was there any feedback that surprised you regarding your performance?
- Refer the intern to the Career Education Center Drop In Hours, for help in adding the internship accomplishments to their resume in a meaningful way.

2. Career Insight and Your Future:

- What did you learn from the different professional connections you made during the internship?
- Do you hope to have future experiences in this industry, or are you ready to pivot and explore a different direction? Many interns decide they do not want to pursue a career in the industry of their internship. Remind them that is normal and an important element of experiential learning and career exploration, but encourage them to think through their next steps.
- What are your thoughts on how the work you've done during your internship connects to your vision of your future self? What interests have been sparked as a result of this experience?

- Outline the importance of thanking the internship supervisor and maintaining a mutually beneficial connection with colleagues that they may have made during the internship. Encourage them to connect with all of their colleagues on LinkedIn and send thank you notes to closest colleagues.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS: As part of supervising an internship for academic credit, you will be reviewing student and internship site supervisor evaluations as well as assigning the student a grade for their internship course.

If you have questions, please contact:

Academic Internship Coordinator | College of Arts & Sciences

Internship & Engagement Coordinator | Career Education Center

internship@up.edu | 503.943.7201