Internship in Psychology — PSYCH 495

This page provides an overview of the requirements and procedures for PSYCH 495, the course which allows students to receive psychology credit for internship work. Additional information may be found on the Internship Form. Note that to be eligible for psychology credit, the internship experience must be primarily psychological in nature.

Enrollment in PSYCH 495 is by permission, and requires approval of an internship placement and plan of study (see below).

Internship Availability

Internship positions are usually located in settings related to clinical or industrial/organizational psychology. Students should be aware that clinically-oriented internships do NOT allow undergraduate students to practice actual psychotherapy. Some clinical internships involve sitting in on therapists’ sessions. Other internships that might be labeled ‘clinical’ exist in a variety of social service agencies. In these internships, students usually work with children, mental health patients, or clients with special needs. Industrial/organizational internships are often in human resource offices or other corporate settings.

Internship for Credit

Although not required, students can receive credit for completing an internship in psychology. A maximum of 3 credits of PSYCH 495 may be applied to 400-level course requirements for the psychology major. Additional credits (up to 15 total credits) may be used as electives. The course may be repeated (with approval). A three-credit internship requires a minimum of 120 hours of work, plus an academic component (see below). The work and academic components will be adjusted for internships that involve more or fewer credits.

Students are responsible for finding an on-site supervisor, typically a psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, or other appropriately trained professional. Along with the work completed on-site, students also are responsible for an academic component (see below). The on-site experience and the academic component are to be completed concurrently. Students must be registered for internship credit during the time of the internship work; it is not possible to obtain internship credit retroactively by completing the academic component in a semester subsequent to the internship experience.

Academic Component and Plan of Study

An internship for credit is intended to provide an opportunity to integrate work experience with the scholarly study of psychology. The required academic component includes the following:

- A reading list of scholarly articles, chapters, or books relevant to the internship work. These readings should include not only textbooks, but also scientific sources intended for psychologists. Many resources are available online to Penn State students. A good tool for finding readings is the database PsycInfo, available through the University Libraries. The plan of study (see below) should identify the nature of readings, and when possible, specific readings. A final list of readings must be submitted no later than the beginning of the 4th week of the
semester. It is strongly recommended that students consult with the internship coordinator in developing the list; approval of specific readings is not automatic.

- Weekly progress reports on the internship work and academic component of the course. Each report should be 2–3 paragraphs in length, and describe not just the work being done but what is being learned. Some reports may include summaries or important points from readings. Weekly progress reports are due each Monday beginning the second week of the semester.

- A final paper integrating the work experience with the readings. The paper should be 8–10 pages long, and should include citations in APA format. The final paper is due on the last day of classes for the semester.

A plan of study to be submitted with the required internship form (see below) should describe in a paragraph or two the nature of the internship work. It should also provide the name, contact information, and brief statement of qualifications of the on-site supervisor. It should also describe the readings, how they will be identified, and how they relate to the internship work. Finally, it should include a brief statement of the written work to be submitted.

**Grades**

Grades are assigned by the internship coordinator based on weekly progress reports, the term paper, and a letter of evaluation from the on-site supervisor. Separate grades are not assigned to the weekly reports, but will be evaluated overall for timely and conscientious completion.

**Registering for Internship Credit**

Registering for internship credit requires the advance permission of the psychology internship coordinator. Follow these steps:

Step 1: Find a placement. To earn psychology credit, your internship must involve psychological work and be in a setting in which you are supervised by a psychologist or associated professional (counselor, social worker, etc.). Typical placements include human services programs, hospitals or treatment centers specializing in psychiatric or psychological care, counseling centers, crisis hotlines, and so on. Some sites may have existing internship programs, but many organizations will be happy to have an intern.

Step 2: Verify that your proposed placement is suitable for psychology internship credit. In order to do this, you should e-mail information about the placement site and supervisor, including descriptions of the mission of the organization and the work you would be doing, to the internship coordinator. Note that it is important that your work be related to psychology—clerical work is not appropriate for a psychology internship even if it is for an organization with a mission related to psychology.

Step 3: Develop a plan of study as described on the Web site and internship form. The plan of study and signed form must be submitted to: Dr. Richard Carlson, Penn State University, Department of Psychology, 111 Moore Building, University Park, PA, 16802, before you can be registered for the class.
Volunteer and Paid Internships

Most psychology internships are volunteer positions, but some are paid positions. Note, however, that the purpose of an internship is to supplement your coursework by allowing you to “test drive” a career, gain work experience that you otherwise would not, or expand your psychology-related work skills in a new direction. Paid positions that are pre-designated by the placement site as internships usually contain these components. Work at a job you already hold is usually not suitable as an internship unless you are taking on additional responsibilities and receiving additional mentoring that go beyond your normal duties for the purpose of an internship.