



**Campus Administrative Policy**

**Policy Title: Academic Internships**

Policy Number: 7020                      Functional Area: Student Affairs

Effective: July 1, 2011  
Date Last Amended/Reviewed: July 1, 2011  
Date Scheduled for Review: July 1, 2018  
Supersedes: N/A (New Policy)

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Applies to: CU Denver

**A. INTRODUCTION**

Internships support a fundamental purpose of CU Denver to provide students with learning opportunities that will enhance the quality of their lives, will make them well-educated citizens, will lead to rewarding careers, and will provide Denver and Colorado with a workforce able to compete in the global economy.

Internships provide opportunities for unique learning experiences while cultivating partnerships with our metropolitan and regional communities; employers nationwide are increasingly hiring recent graduates with internship experience. Increasing and codifying the way in which we integrate internship experiences into the CU Denver educational experience is one concrete way to enhance the success of our graduates.

The policies contained within this document apply only to Academic Internships offered by CU Denver.

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**C. EXCLUSIONS**

Practical/Practicum and professional licensure programs are excluded from this policy.

**D. DEFINITIONS**

Internships formally integrate students’ academic studies with practical work experience in a professional environment. They are structured, supervised experiences involving intentional learning goals that support the student's educational and career interests while enhancing personal development and professional preparation. Students participate in two primary types of internships:

*Academic Internships:*

A curriculum-based practical work experience in a particular field of study that enhances student learning and for which a student is enrolled and receives academic credit. In addition to the workplace supervisor, the student is also supported by a discipline-specific, chair/director/dean-approved faculty sponsor or department instructor who facilitates the academic aspects of the internship and monitors the student’s progress. Every Academic Internship requires a Learning Agreement, signed by the student, the faculty sponsor, the workplace supervisor and an Internship Advisor. Academic internships may be paid or unpaid.

*Not-for-Credit Internship Overseen by the Experiential Learning Center:*

A Not-for-credit Internship (previously referred to as a co-op or cooperative education experience) provides a practical work experience related to a student’s

field of study and complements the student's academic training and promotes career development. Students participating in these types of internships may be paid by the employer for work performed but not always. Not-for-Credit Internships differ from part-time employment due to the learning nature of the experience. While no faculty sponsorship is required, a Learning Agreement and university waiver, signed by the student, an internship advisor from the Experiential Learning Center and the workplace supervisor are required, and the student will be given an opportunity to participate in supplemental professional development activities.

Unpaid/volunteer experiences, not facilitated as internships through the University Experiential Learning Center, are not covered by this policy.

#### Internship Participants

Internships are three-way collaborations among a student, an experience provider (employer) and the University. CU Denver defines the role of each party as follows:

*Student Intern* – The student intern is a degree-seeking (or certificate-program requiring internship) student in good standing currently enrolled at CU Denver. Interns are responsible for adherence to all campus and program internship requirements. They are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with CU Denver guidelines for ethical conduct, meet their obligations at the internship site and meet the academic requirements as stipulated in the internship learning agreement associated with the experience.

*Experience Provider* – The experience provider is a business or organization approved by the University to provide a work experience related to a student's field of study. The site supervisor within the organization is a qualified professional in the field who meets with the student on a regular basis to monitor work assignments, mentor the intern, provide opportunities for the student to accomplish identified learning goals, and provide a performance evaluation at the conclusion of the experience.

*Faculty Sponsor* – The faculty sponsor is the instructor of record under whom an Internship course is registered. The faculty sponsor is responsible for monitoring the academic quality of the internship experience including: assisting the student in developing appropriate learning goals; providing academic assignments that will deepen academic knowledge in the discipline and foster integration of theory and practice; assessing the student's progress; providing feedback; and assigning final grades. These requirements will be articulated in the Learning Agreement, which is approved and signed by all parties to the internship.

*Internship Coordinator/Advisor* – The internship coordinator/advisor serves as a liaison between the student, experience provider and faculty and troubleshoots any

non- academic problems that arise. The coordinator/advisor develops internship opportunities for students, educates students regarding internship policies and procedures, and handles all administrative aspects the internship.

### Internship Learning Agreement

An internship learning agreement is an academic department-approved document that codifies the responsibilities of all parties involved in the internship and clearly outlines the intern's work duties, learning goals, and academic assignments. It provides contact information for each party and identifies responsibility for liability/workers-compensation insurance.

## **E. POLICY STATEMENT**

### **1. Internship Requirements**

All academic internships offered by CU Denver:

- a. are directly related to the student's field of study and/or professional goals;
- b. provide for integration of academic and experiential learning;
- c. are deemed academically viable by the department awarding credit;
- d. include appropriate written agreements between the student, experience provider, and University that clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of each party to ensure the integrity of the internship experience and address legal and liability issues;
- e. require an evaluation by the experience provider and student at the end of the internship;
- f. require academic assignments.

### **2. Student Eligibility**

All students must meet the minimum requirements listed below to participate in a university-sponsored internship:

- a. Currently enrolled in a CU Denver degree, certificate, or licensure program.
- b. Currently in good academic standing at CU Denver.
- c. All eligibility decisions for an internship are made on a case-by-case basis and conduct violations may result in the loss of eligibility.

Each school/college holds full authority to require additional eligibility requirements beyond these minimums. All eligibility decisions for an internship are made on a case by case basis, and conduct violations may result in the loss of eligibility.

### **3. Experience Provider Eligibility**

All Experience Providers must comply with the following requirements:

- a. The organization must be a legitimate established business entity, non-profit or government agency;
- b. The organization may not be a home-based business. Any home-based

business granted an exception to this requirement must be evaluated for safety and liability, and approved by the faculty sponsor and/or chair/director and Internship Coordinator;

- c. The supervisor agrees to provide necessary orientation, training, and precautionary safety instructions for the student intern;
- d. The employer agrees to provide work assignments directly related to a student's CU Denver field of study that provide opportunities to accomplish the learning goals outlined in an internship learning agreement;
- e. The student is directly supervised by a practicing professional in the field who agrees to provide the student ongoing supervision, performance reviews and a final evaluation at the end of the internship;
- f. The internship supervisor agrees to provide the minimum number of work hours required for the student to receive academic credit;
- g. The internship site supervisor agrees to provide timely notification to the internship coordinator if any problems arise during the course of the internship;
- h. The employer may not require student to pay the employer in any form for any part of the experience;
- i. The student must have access to an appropriate workspace and tools with which to perform their duties (see virtual internships D.9);
- j. The employer will disclose to the University any agreements requested that are in addition to the learning agreement such as confidentiality agreements, etc. The University prohibits internships that require "hold harmless" agreements;
- k. The student may not be considered a "consultant" or be expected to provide a function the employer's professional staff does not have skills to perform. Interns may not be hired as "independent contractors."

#### **4. Faculty Sponsor Eligibility and Criteria**

Faculty sponsors:

- a. must be pre-approved by their department chair/director, or by the college's Dean's Office;
- b. must be CU Denver faculty or dually-appointed CU Denver| Anschutz faculty;
- c. must hold at least the minimum rank of instructor;
- d. must be the faculty of record providing direct academic oversight and may not reassign academic oversight to another (including adjunct, lecturer, teaching assistant, graduate assistant, etc.); may not serve as both faculty of record and experience provider for the internship

#### **5. Academic Credit Requirement**

- a. Each school/college shall determine the total number of internship credits allowed within the limits of its degree programs and shall determine how internships are counted in a degree plan (elective credit, requirement for graduation, etc.).

- b. Students may earn one to six hours of academic credit for each internship experience as determined by departmental requirements.
- c. The number of credit hours earned per internship experience shall be arranged between the student and the faculty supervisor and documented on an internship learning agreement or other college-sanctioned written agreement.
- d. Student interns work a minimum of 45 hours per 1 hour of academic credit.
- e. Internship credit can NOT be granted retroactively for previous internship experiences.
- f. The duration of an academic internship is typically one semester and coincides with the published semester calendar. Students usually work part time, approximately 10 – 20 hours per week. Students may work multiple semesters; however, they must have clearly defined and different learning goals for each semester worked.
- g. Fall and Spring internships must last a minimum of 10 full weeks and must be added before the end of the 4th week of the semester. Summer internships must last a minimum of 6 full weeks and must be added before the end of the 2nd week of the semester. Under special circumstances, the length of the internship may be adjusted if approved by the Faculty Sponsor and Experience Provider.
- h. The internship drop period follows regular University drop policies. Students must notify their faculty sponsor, internship advisor, and the employer prior to dropping an internship.

**6. Internship vs. Independent Study**

Internships differ from Independent Study, Directed Study and/or other academic or lab- based courses due to the central relationship with, and reliance upon, the experience provider. Each school/college currently has at least one course number specifically designated for internships as defined by this policy. (Some colleges refer to these courses as co-op or practice/practicum). Due to the supervisory requirements of the student/faculty/employer relationship, it is not appropriate to use Independent Study or Directed Study for internships.

**7. Internship Administration and Coordination**

All internships offered at CU Denver shall incorporate an administrative function. This will include the coordination and administration of the internship policies, monitoring compliance with the legal process governing internships and the liability issues surrounding off-campus student involvement and the facilitation of the evaluation process for experience providers and students.

- a. Undergraduate Internships  
The Experiential Learning Center provides the centralized administration and coordination of academic internships for all undergraduate programs at CU Denver. (Due to the comprehensive nature of the professional development school network in the Initial Professional Teacher Education Program (IPTE) and the requirement of closely integrated internships with program curriculum for teacher licensure, the School of Education and Human Development will

provide the administrative support necessary to coordinate all undergraduate IPTE internship experiences.)

In addition to the responsibilities listed above, the Experiential Learning Center:

- 1) maintains an online internship database and other related resources for students;
- 2) in compliance with academic department guidelines, screens employers and internship postings to ensure a quality experience in a safe and appropriate work environment (academic departments have final authority to accept/reject internships based on the academic merit of the experience);
- 3) develops internship opportunities for all majors;
- 4) provides internship orientations to educate students regarding internship policies and procedures;
- 5) screens students' internship eligibility based on college-specific requirements;
- 6) ensures that a signed internship learning agreement is in place for each student intern;
- 7) troubleshoots non-academic issues between experience provider and intern (e.g. sexual harassment, inappropriate work duties, poor work habits, etc.), and notifies faculty sponsor of problems;
- 8) administers and coordinates end of semester performance evaluations from experience providers and students;
- 9) serves as a resource for best practices and standards for employers, students and faculty.

b. Graduate Internships

Internships for graduate students are typically administered by their specific school/colleges. This is due to the primary educational role the internship experience has within the curriculum and the extensive number of field hours and academic credits assigned to the experience.

All graduate departments shall adhere to the policies stated in this document regarding the administration of their internship programs. Graduate programs may elect to use the services of the centralized internship office to provide administration and coordination of "elective" internships. These graduate-level internships shall use the course number 5939 and 6939. As with all academic internships, faculty supervision within the student's home department is required.

**8. Out-of-state Internships**

Out-of-state internships are bound by the same policies and guidelines as in-state internships.

## **9. Virtual Internships**

Virtual internships involve work that is done remotely over the Web, email and phone. Given the flexible nature of virtual internships where there is potential for the intern and supervisor never to meet face-to-face, the following criteria must be met in addition to the requirements outlined in policy statements D.1 and D.3:

- a. The type and frequency of contact between the Experience Provider and intern must be determined in advance and documented on the Internship Learning Agreement.
- b. The Experience Provider must hold a minimum of one meeting per week with the intern (either face-to-face, on the phone, or using web-based technology) to provide direct feedback and supervision regarding projects, assignments, deadlines, etc.

Students engaging in virtual internships must have access to the appropriate tools with which to perform their duties.

## **10. International Internships**

International internships are covered under a separate policy.

## **11. Internship Learning Agreement**

To protect students involved in externally-sponsored university-administered internships, an internship learning agreement is required for all internship placements and must be signed by each partner before the internship commences and the course can be added.

## **12. Course Registration Status**

Academic internships will generally be classified as State-funded instruction. However, internships may be offered as Continuing Professional Education (CPE) cash-funded credit as long as all established campus and program policies regarding cash-funded instruction and scheduling are followed. For more information go to [CU Denver's CPE website](#).

## **D. FACULTY WORKLOAD AND COMPENSATION**

Internships for academic credit must adhere to an appropriate level of documentation and academic oversight. As in all academic course offerings, the expectation is that faculty have adequate time and resources to plan, implement and assess internship experiences and that the faculty are fairly compensated and recognized for their work.

The University acknowledges that variation in size, structure and intent among schools, departments and programs necessitates some flexibility in a faculty internship compensation policy. However, the University considers the Internship a legitimate academic learning experience, for which faculty can expect appropriate compensation and/or load consideration.

The rostering of student internships for the purpose of faculty load credit for Internship oversight is the purview of the academic unit(s). When internship oversight is assigned as

part of the faculty load, evaluation of internship courses and credits should be incorporated into annual merit and RTP Teaching valuation.

## **NOTES**

1. Dates of official enactment and amendments:  
July 1, 2011: Adopted by the Provost
2. History:  
September 6, 2018: Modified to reflect a Campus-wide effort to recast and revitalize Campus policy sites into a standardized and more coherent set of chaptered policy statements organized around the several operational divisions of the university. Article links, format, and University branding updated by the Provost's office.
3. Initial Policy Effective Date: July 1, 2011
4. Cross References/Appendix: N/A