

Master of Urban Planning Program
Department of Urban and Public Affairs
University of Louisville

Internship/Practicum Handbook

Revised: March 2020

1. Introduction

The professional internship or practicum is an important component of the Master of Urban Planning (MUP) program at the University of Louisville. This learning experience offers the intern or practicum student the opportunity to integrate and test the skills and knowledge accumulated during the academic program of study.

The internship/practicum offers challenging professional work experience that will expose the student to the myriad demands that face planners, public servants, managers, and other allied professions. Above all, this exposure to a planning-oriented organization offers the student significant opportunity to apply the knowledge obtained through other course work in the MUP program.

A student is required to complete a minimum of 18 credit hours in the program prior to enrolling in PLAN 606 and completing the internship or practicum.

This handbook is designed to answer questions and assist you in early preparation for the internship/practicum component of your coursework. Please note the handbook covers the Internship/Practicum elements of this course. Students should refer to the course syllabus for additional information regarding the Professional Practice components of the course.

Please read the booklet thoroughly and direct any questions you may have to course instructor.

Internship or Practicum?

MUP students are expected to complete 3 semester hours of either an internship or practicum.

Those classified as **pre-service** (those not currently employed in a planning-related position and/or without relevant work experience) must elect the **internship** option.

The internship is normally pursued by pre-service students and is a guided work experience designed to give students a realistic exposure to the planning arena. The internship includes work in an administrative or planning position in a government, non-profit, or appropriate private sponsoring organization. The internship is carried out under the direction of both an agency mentor and the course instructor. The MUP internship must include **a minimum of 200 hours** over a period of not less than one full academic semester. The intern is required to keep a journal logging these hours and submit a final research paper at the completion of the internship period. The guidelines for the paper and journal are detailed later in this handbook.

Those students who are defined as **in-service** (individuals who are currently employed in a planning-related position with a governmental, non-profit, or appropriate private agency

and have been employed there for a period of at least one year) are eligible for the **practicum** option.

The practicum is an extensive research paper/project pursued at the student's place of employment while under the supervision of the course instructor. The form and content of the project are not fixed, however the content must be relevant to the student's experience and workplace. The Instructor will evaluate the final written product. Criteria for organizations involved in the practicum setting are detailed within this handbook.

The MUP practicum must include **a minimum of 200 hours** over a period of not less than one full academic semester. The student is required to keep a journal logging these hours and submit a final research paper at the completion of the practicum period. The guidelines for the paper and journal are detailed later in this handbook.

2. Internship/Practicum Approval Process

Successfully securing an internship or practicum requires that the student properly complete each step of the application procedure. Specifically:

1. **ONE FULL SEMESTER BEFORE** the anticipated start of the internship or practicum, the student should schedule a planning meeting with the MUP advisor.
2. The student advisor will assist the student in identifying appropriate internship opportunities. It is the responsibility of the student to forward a resume and a cover letter to the sponsoring organization for review.
3. Once the sponsoring organization and subsequent internship/ practicum project has been identified, it is necessary that the student notify the course instructor (and MUP advisor) and ask for approval of this project. The student should submit the **Memorandum of Understanding** form and obtain all necessary signatures. A copy of the form is included later in this handbook.

This process should be completed before enrollment in PLAN 606 and no later than the end of the first week of the semester during which the student is enrolled in PLAN 606.

3. Student Responsibilities

The professional internship/practicum not only provides the student with a valuable learning experience to complement the academic curriculum, but can also play a critical role in the development of career opportunities. Internships and practicum opportunities require both professional conduct and responsibility. The student's performance will be evaluated and it is important to exhibit professional behavior including appropriate dress, attitude, and punctuality. During the course of the internship/practicum period, the

intern is responsible for following the policies and rules of the sponsoring organization. Questions about this should be directed to the sponsoring mentor.

Similarly, the sponsoring agency should meet the same professional standards. If the student should have any concerns, they should be brought to the attention of the MUP advisor.

Checklist of Student Responsibilities

1. Obtain and review the *Internship/Practicum Handbook*.
2. Meet with MUP Advisor one semester prior to enrolling in PLAN 606.
3. Update resume and cover letter.
4. Apply to and obtain Internship position/finalize Practicum project with supervisor/sponsoring agency.
5. Complete the internship/practicum Memorandum of Understanding and obtain appropriate signatures.
6. Completion of 200 internship/practicum hours for MUP students.
6. Satisfactory performance as evaluated on the final evaluation report by the sponsoring agency.
7. Satisfactory completion of the responsibilities outlined in the internship/practicum agreement form.
8. Satisfactory completion of the final research paper/project and submission of the internship/practicum journal.

3. Sponsoring Organization Responsibilities

The sponsoring organization must be legally established and financially sound. A representative of the sponsoring organization must sign the internship/practicum agreement and must assign a member of its staff as an internship/practicum mentor. The mentor should:

- Discuss the internship/practicum responsibilities and be available to answer questions and offer guidance to the intern.
- When necessary, hold conferences with the student to discuss their progress in meeting the objectives of the internship/practicum.
- Provide the student with a suitable work environment.
- Complete the final evaluation report and return it to the Course Instructor.

- The evaluation form is contained within this handbook and the student will provide the sponsoring organization with the form at the beginning of the assignment.

4. Research Paper Guidelines

The internship/practicum paper is designed to reflect a student's ability to integrate theoretical classroom and research experiences with the body of applied skills attained during the internship/practicum experience. The paper should demonstrate the student's grasp of urban planning theories, concepts, methods, and issues by relating them to aspects of the internship/practicum context in which the student participated.

The purpose of the research paper is *not* to provide a narrative review of the student's day-to-day job duties, nor a sequential course-by-course review of the significance of the student's classroom experience; but rather it is to discern the student's ability to synthesize and apply what is relevant in this broad interdisciplinary field so as to acquire a fuller comprehension of the tasks performed by the intern/practicum student, his or her role in the agency, and the agency's place in the larger organizational context.

The student should demonstrate achievement of program core competencies by linking the internship/practicum experience to the following identified learning outcomes for the MUP program:

- 1) Understanding of urban settlement patterns and the history, theory, administration, law, and politics of planning.
- 2) Knowledge of at least one specialized field within planning.
- 3) Skills in problem solving.
- 4) Appreciation of the role of values in planning.
- 5) Skills for successfully functioning in a professional work environment.

Format

The paper should be approximately 8 to 10 typed, double-spaced pages. A title page, table of contents, and a list of reference materials consulted should be included. These items do not count towards the stated page limit. APA citation style should be used, including in-text citations and a list of references at the end of the document.

Although the precise form of an internship/practicum paper may vary with the nature of the internship, in general the paper should contain the following elements:

1. **A description of the internship/practicum:** the employer, the student's position in the organization, and the tasks performed or the project on which the student worked.

2. A critical discussion of the planning process and the organization: In this section, the student should think critically about such matters as:

- the work they performed
- the purpose of the work performed
- the culture of the workplace
- the relationship between your work and the larger goals of the agency/organization
- the structure of the agency/organization; how does the power structure manifest itself?
- the relationship of the agency or the project to local politics and community involvement
- the methods applied to meet the project goals or the broader planning mission of the organization

This section should be reflective, thoughtful, and critical, yet constructive. Additionally, students should include citations from the academic and profession planning literature as necessary. *At a minimum, the paper should include at least five citations.*

3. Reflection on internship/practicum experience: Reflect on the value of the internship/practicum experience as it relates to the student's individual development, the MUP program learning outcomes listed in the previous section, and the potential value of such an internship/practicum for other MUP students. Questions to consider related to individual development include:

- How did your internship/practicum experience change your perception of the practice of urban planning?
- Reflect back on your early assessment of your workplace. How did your views change by the end of your internship/practicum?
- How did your internship/practicum experience help you think about your future as a professional planner?

*****The due date for the research paper is the last day of class for the semester that the student is enrolled in the internship/ practicum. The research paper will be graded on the extent to which it follows the format described above and shows depth of analysis.**

***Department of Urban and Public Affairs
University of Louisville
MUP Internship/Practicum
Memorandum of Understanding***

The Department of Urban and Public Affairs, University of Louisville, _____,
Student
and _____ agree to the following:
Sponsoring Organization

1. The student is enrolled in the MUP program at the University of Louisville.
2. The student will perform the services requested in a fully professional manner.
3. Sponsoring organizations agree to provide a mentor and the Department of Urban and Public Affairs agrees to provide a faculty supervisor.
4. The internship/practicum mentor and the student will mutually strive to develop an effective working relationship, with the mentor providing an appropriate level of support and encouragement to the student.
5. The internship/practicum mentor will make every effort to insure that the student participates in as many facets as possible of the work within their area of responsibility.
6. A student who completes a *practicum*, which occurs at the student's regular place of work, will be required to engage in a work experience that is significantly different from their normal duties.
7. While every position requires some clerical tasks, these tasks should be incidental to the main duties of the internship/practicum.
8. When feasible, every attempt will be made to permit the student to observe or participate in various levels of decision-making in which the supervisor participates.
9. The internship/practicum mentor will complete a formal evaluation at the end of the internship/practicum and return it to the MUP Advisor.
10. The internship/practicum will commence on _____ and end on _____, and it will require _____ hours of work per week. The student's mentor, department, and general responsibilities are as follows:

Mentor Name _____

Mentor Title _____

Name of Sponsoring Agency _____

General Responsibilities

Stipend/Compensation (if provided by sponsor) _____

Faculty Supervisor _____

Additional Comments

Signatures:

Student _____

Internship Mentor _____

Faculty Supervisor _____

Program Director _____

*****For Student*****

I understand that the internship/practicum deliverables include (1) Paper; (2) Journal; (3) Evaluation. These deliverables must conform to the internship/practicum Handbook guidelines and be turned in electronically by the last day of classes for the semester in which I am enrolled for the PLAN 606: Internship & Professional Practice

Initials _____

***Department of Urban and Public Affairs - University of Louisville –
MUP Internship/Practicum Evaluation***

Name of Student Intern _____

Rating scale: 1: Poor
 2: Below Average
 3: Average
 4: Good
 5: Superior

<u>Ability to Work with Agency/Community</u>		1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1.	Understanding of agency purpose/function:	—	—	—	—	—	—
2.	Ability to understand and use agency policies and procedures:	—	—	—	—	—	—
3.	Ability to plan, organize and use time effectively:	—	—	—	—	—	—
4.	Knowledge and use of available resources:	—	—	—	—	—	—
5.	Ability to obtain pertinent information/facts when needed:	—	—	—	—	—	—
6.	Ability to distinguish relevant from irrelevant materials:	—	—	—	—	—	—
7.	Ability to plan a course of action:	—	—	—	—	—	—
8.	Written communication skills (memos, reports, briefs):	—	—	—	—	—	—
9.	Presentation skills (meetings, proposals):	—	—	—	—	—	—
10.	Ability to relate/apply theoretical knowledge to a given problem or agency function:	—	—	—	—	—	—
11.	Ability to communicate with staff/others:	—	—	—	—	—	—

12.	Ability to obtain relevant facts from materials:	—	—	—	—	—	—
<u>Professional development</u>		1	2	3	4	5	N/A
13.	Integration of theory and practice:	—	—	—	—	—	—
14.	Shows pattern of continuous learning:	—	—	—	—	—	—
15.	Ability to focus on problems/needs of agency:	—	—	—	—	—	—
16.	Attitude towards authority:	—	—	—	—	—	—
17.	Attitude toward assuming leadership role/additional responsibilities:	—	—	—	—	—	—
18.	Promptness:	—	—	—	—	—	—
19.	Dependability:	—	—	—	—	—	—

Additional comments:

Would you feel confident in hiring/recommending this student for a job?

Are the skills and theoretical knowledge gained by this student/employee in the MUP program beneficial to the needs of your agency/organization?

What suggestions, if any, do you have for the improvement of the MUP Program?

Additional comments:

Signature of Agency Mentor _____

Mentor's Name (printed) _____

Title _____

Name of Agency _____

Date _____