

# Internship/Work Practice Experience: Guidelines and Good Practice ACADEMIC POLICY



## Policy owner

UCD Career Development Centre

## Approval date and body

Academic Council, 1 May 2014

## 1. Purpose

Professional or experiential learning has been an integral component of a number of programmes at UCD for many years. In the context of a modular credit based system there exists a requirement for an articulated statement of university-wide policy regarding what constitutes a valid internship, how such internships should be defined, monitored and assessed, the appropriate ECTS credit available for such internships, etc. This document takes account of current practice across the University and draws upon best practice in industry and different professional disciplines.

## 2. Definitions

This policy outlines a set of guidelines to support current activities and facilitate the development of future internship activities at University College Dublin where learning takes place outside the University in an experiential setting. This activity can refer to professional clinical practice placements, work experience/internships based in companies/industry and other professional fieldwork experiences (hereinafter referred to as 'internships within this document'). This policy document is concerned with arrangements made for such internship learning that constitutes a planned and intended part of an academic programme, is assessed by that programme and for which ECTS credit is awarded. This policy shall help ensure parity of practice across the University.

## 3. Scope

It should be noted that any experiential learning activities that students are required to take as part of a Programme are covered by this policy. For programmes that have yet to be modularised, the role of the Programme Board as set out in this document may be deemed to be fulfilled by the School which hosts the programme. It should be noted that this policy does not cover part-time or full-time paid work

undertaken by students under a contract of employment, nor does it cover voluntary work undertaken by students that attracts no modular credits.

## 4. Principles

This policy establishes a university-wide set of minimum standards and guidelines to be applied to all programmes that award credit for internships.

### 4.1. Academic and Professional Rationale for Internships

The inclusion of an internship within a programme should have a clearly stated academic and professional purpose. The overall rationale for the internship should be clearly articulated within the programmes' specified learning outcomes. It should easily demonstrate its role in advancing students' assimilation and application of knowledge. The definition of the internship opportunity should make explicit for the student the respective roles and authority of the University and the internship host. This will normally include a clear articulation of the relevant policies governing students' employment status, code of conduct arrangements, any financial arrangements and the applicability of the University's Student Code.

### 4.2. Module Design

- The module descriptor shall specify the academic requirements for the internship in terms of the number of credits to be awarded, student workload, attendance requirements, duration of internship, expected learning outcomes and form of assessment used. Grounds for failure and opportunities for remediation of that failure should be set out clearly.
- The module descriptor may be supplemented by a specific learning agreement which indicates specific learning outcomes associated with an internship position. Such an agreement is drawn up between the University, the student and, where applicable, the internship host. In the case of industrial based internships (non-professional clinical practice) such a learning agreement is included as part of the 'Statement of Internship' which forms part of the Internship Agreement established between UCD and the internship host. Learning agreements should be formally agreed prior to or during the first two weeks of the internship.

*(The detail of the learning agreement will vary according to the overall purpose of the internship within the programme. For example, where specific learning outcomes are set out in the module descriptor, such as the achievement of specific competencies, there may be no requirement to develop further individualised learning agreements. However, where students on a programme may be going to different settings, an individualised learning agreement will be helpful. Such learning agreements should ensure that expectations for achieving the required learning outcomes are explicit and agreed between the programme, the student and, where applicable, the internship host).*

- Additional information such as regulatory information and academic guidelines for host providers offering internships, host provider requirements for Garda clearance, immunisation and health and safety requirements, etc, should be available and referred to within the module and programme descriptor. All relevant additional information should be accessible to students.
- There should be a coherent connection between the number of learning hours expected of the student while on internship and the credit awarded. For professionally accredited programmes, the relationship between duration of internship and the credit should also be in accordance with relevant state regulatory body guidelines, where appropriate.
- Where a programme involves a number of short internships that, on their own, do not equate to the minimum for an undergraduate module, these internships can be combined to form a single module.
- The number of permissible repeats of an internship /professional experience module should be clearly stated by the Programme Board.

- All internships undertaken as mandatory integral components of a programme must be defined within the context of the modular system (i.e. as a module or a constituent part of a module) and be described within or by an appropriate module descriptor.

#### **4.3. Identification of Internships**

- The Programme Board is responsible for verifying that Schools offering internship modules will make an adequate number of suitable internships available to students. Each internship should be able to provide the learning opportunities to enable students to meet the expected learning outcomes.
- Where an adequate number of internships (or single internships of adequate duration and challenge) cannot be arranged for the students on a programme, provision should be made for alternative learning activities, such as a project, to demonstrate that the students have broadly met the learning outcomes for the module, provided this is compatible with requirements of the relevant regulatory professional body where such exist.
- Where a student has a specific access need, the Programme Board should ensure that Schools offering work internship/practice experience modules take responsibility for the provision of an internship that adequately meets these needs, within the constraints of the internship opportunities available to the School, provided this is compatible with requirements of the relevant regulatory professional body where such exist.
- Where an appropriate internship cannot be arranged for a student with specific access needs, provision should be made for alternative learning activities, such as a project, to demonstrate that the student has broadly met the learning outcomes for the module.
- The Programme Board should verify that Schools offering internship/practice experience modules will ensure that each internship meets the required standard of support and supervision for the student. Normally this will involve defining and operating a methodology for assessing the suitability of the host provider in offering such internships.
- In Programmes where students negotiate the location of their own internship, the programme should ensure that the standards and learning opportunities of that internship are suitable for the student's needs and/or, where relevant, are in accordance with the requirements of the relevant professional body.
- The Programme Board should verify that Schools offering internships will ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to maintain contact with all students during the period of the internship. In the case of overseas internships, specific arrangements should be in place to monitor the effective operation of the internship and to offer support to the student in cases of emergency.

#### **4.4. Orientation of Students**

It is the responsibility of the Programme Board to verify that Schools offering internships will ensure that all students complete all necessary paperwork (as for example in the case of industrial based internships where students are required to sign in advance the 'student internship acceptance form'), are fully briefed and oriented on the purposes of their internship experience, the academic and professional requirements of the internship, their obligations under the University's Student Code, the relevant Health and Safety issues associated with their internship and any other requirements, academic or otherwise, which the Programme Board may specify, or which may be specified by the relevant regulatory professional body. In particular it is expected that the Programme Board will wish to ensure that the student understands the following:

- Students on industrial based internships shall sign the 'Student Internship Acceptance Form; prior to commencing his/her internship.
- Prior to the internship, students should be made aware of the person within the host provider that is their direct supervisor and the lines of authority within which they are required to operate.
- Students should be made aware of the person who will be responsible for assessing their achievement of the specified learning outcomes for the internship.

- Students should be made aware of any relevant codes of practice and/or regulations that are specific to the host provider at the commencement of the internship. Students are required to comply with such codes.
- Where a programme operates a practice tutor system, involving UCD permanent or contract staff who monitor or visit students on internship, or staff in practice host providers whose duties include the support of students on internship, students should be made aware of the identity of the tutors and the roles of their respective practice supervisors and practice tutors in relation to internships.
- Students should be made aware of the mechanisms for raising complaints or concerns about their internship experience.
- A mechanism should be put in place to allow students to communicate back to the School, or where issues are deemed to be not satisfactorily addressed by the School to the Programme Board, any concerns or complaints about their experience without fear of jeopardising their progress on the internship. Ideally, such concerns should be raised prior to the completion of the final assessment.
- Students need to have clear guidance from their internship supervisor on issues such as attendance, appropriate dress, time-keeping, travel arrangements and other work-place protocols.
- Certain host providers may have specific requirements, such as immunisation requirements. Where such immunisation is provided for students by the programme, but declined by a student, the student needs to be aware of the limitations that this decision may place on them in regard to their internship options. Full records of any vaccinations offered, received and/or declined must be kept by the relevant School.
- Students should be made aware of the general requirements to work and behave in a safe manner as placed upon them by relevant health and safety legislation.
- Students should be aware that it is expected that they will uphold the same standards of conduct during internship as is required of them whilst in attendance at the University, complying with the University's Student Code and its Policy on Dignity and Respect.

#### **4.5. Orientation / Agreements with Internship Hosts**

All internships require a signed agreement between the University and the internship host. The Agreement is a standard contract provided by the University which should be signed prior to the commencement of the internship. Professional clinical practice placements shall use the standard UCD 'Work placement agreement'; industrial based internships shall use the standard UCD 'Internship Agreement'. In addition, it is the responsibility of the Programme Board to verify that Schools offering internships will ensure that host providers are briefed fully on the University's requirements and any specific internship agreements and/or regulations that relate to the internship. In particular the Programme Board should ensure that:

- There is a clear articulation of the role of the internship supervisor, this may include information about their role in monitoring, managing and assessing students during internship.
- Internship supervisors should be supported by the Programme Board to facilitate them in effectively carrying out their supervisory role. This may involve provision of training of internship supervisors by the University.
- Additional supports may need to be provided to internship supervisors in instances where internship difficulties have arisen.
- Internship supervisors should have a designated point of contact for the University programme, such as the Programme Fieldwork Coordinator.
- Before the start of an internship, the host provider should clearly outline the health and safety procedures in place in the host provider and should specify the health and safety training and equipment that will be given to the student.
- In cases where students receive a payment from the internship host, it is preferable that such a payment should come in the form of a bursary/stipend and that the student should not become an employee of the company. In cases where students do become company employees, the School should be satisfied that any employment contract offered to students does not reduce the conditions set out in the internship agreement between the University and the internship host (company). Unless clearly indicated otherwise, any intellectual property created by the student

will remain with the internship host/company where the student becomes an employee of that company.

- Internship supervisors are made aware that all students must receive suitable health and safety induction prior to beginning their internship, or as soon as is practicable thereafter.

#### **4.6. Assessment of Internship**

- An appropriate form of assessment methodology should be agreed by the Programme Board and articulated in the module descriptor. Information on the type of award given should be included. Programme Boards must decide whether the internship will carry a specific grade (A-F) relating to performance on the internship or whether an award is made on a pass/fail basis.
- Where internship supervisors are to undertake assessment of students they should be briefed on the precise expected learning outcomes as set down by the Programme Board. These should include an understanding of the nature of the assessment process, which will either verify a student's competency or grade the level of practice performance.
- Grounds for failure of an internship must be made explicit.
- There should be clear articulation of information relating to (a) any opportunity to repeat the internship, or (b) any opportunity to remediate a failure, where that is permitted.
- Regulations relating to an appeal against the failure of an internship must be made explicit in line with the university appeals process.
- Any investigation that may be required to assess problems arising during an internship will be carried out by the institution best placed to undertake such an investigation.

#### **4.7. Review and Monitoring of Internships**

- Students and supervisors should be advised of the importance of having agreed regular supervisory sessions during the course of the internship. The purpose of such sessions should be set out explicitly in any briefing documents provided to the supervisor or student.
- For all internships, appropriate written evidence should exist in order that a student's attendance and satisfactory completion of the internship can be verified by the Programme Board.
- The Programme Board should keep the assessment methodology for the internship under review.
- In internships where difficulties have been identified, these difficulties should be ameliorated before the setting is used again.
- In some contexts, to ensure the achievement of specific professional competencies through internship, Programme Boards may wish or need to develop and implement audit mechanisms to ensure that such competencies have been achieved and can continue to be practised in the longer term.

#### **4.8. Obligations of the University and the Internship Host in respect of the Student**

All internships require a signed agreement between the University and the internship host. The agreement specifies the internship hosts' obligations to students and to UCD in relation to Health and Safety legislation. This contract will be separate to any individual learning agreement drawn up to deal with students' learning needs, etc. In the case of the Internship Agreement, as used for industrial based internships, the main body of the Internship Agreement is standard wording applicable to all such internships. However, the basic form of the 'Statement of Internship' which is attached as an appendix must be completed for each student individually. As explained in Section 3.2 the details of the 'Statement of Internship' will vary according to the conditions offered by the internship host and the overall purpose of the internship within the programme.

#### **4.9. Supplementary Guides/Code Subject Specific**

Programmes may establish supplementary guidelines to provide detailed information relating to the required learning objectives of an internship. This may include documentation for either the student or supervisor to keep a record of progress during internships.

## 5. Related documents

- UCD Student Code: Student Conduct on Work Placements
- Student Internship acceptance form
- Student Internship Agreement (host agreement)

## 6. Version history

Version	Date	Summary of Changes	Changed by
1.0	01-12-06	First draft	BR, EN & LF
1.1	11-01-07	Second draft	BR, EN & LF
1.2	24-01-07	Third draft	BR & LF
1.3	15-02-07	Fourth draft	BR & LF
1.4	12-04-07	Final draft	LF
1.5	01-05-14	Word Internship replaced placement & associated editorial changes.	TL