

INTERNSHIP/CO-OP REFLECTIVE ASSIGNMENTS

Quality experiential learning experiences include reflection. Faculty advisors, site supervisors, and other mentors have the opportunity to help students reflect on their experiences. One way students can reflect on their internship is through academic components and reflective assignments. Below are a few options for academic assignments that can be given to student interns and co-op students. *These assignments are meant to be edited and adjusted to meet the expectations of the faculty advisor or particular discipline requirements.

1. Final Reflective Essay

Final reflective essays are the most common type of assessment for experiential learning. Final reflective essays are completed towards the end of the intern's experience. These essays can contain summaries of experiences, but mostly ask the student to think about the greater impact of their experience. Often times, instructors will ask students to provide specific examples to illustrate learning or professional growth that took place during their time as an intern.

Directions: Submit a final reflective paper towards the end of your experience. [Specific dates, deadlines, requirements, length, and submission instructions are left to the discretion of the faculty internship advisor.]

Assignment: [Specific requirements can be determined by the faculty internship advisor. Length of essays can vary from 3 – 5 pages to 5 – 10 pages. This will depend on the structure of the assignment and the faculty internship advisor's expectations. Essays can be more structured or less structured in nature. Often times, a few guiding questions or prompts can help students dig deeper and truly reflect on the learning that took place.]

*For ideas on prompts and questions, see the "Reflective Questions and Prompts" resource.

2. Informational Interview

Informational interviews are great for students who are eager to learn more about a particular industry, or simply learn more about the world of work in general. These interviews are a great way for students to explore different careers and roles within an organization and a great way to build their professional network as well.

Directions: The intern will conduct an informational interview with an individual, besides their site supervisor, within their organization. The student should seek out individuals working in areas that are of interest to them, highly regarded within the company, a management or executive level employee, or someone who they naturally gravitate towards and respect. The interview should be less formal and more conversational in nature. The student should determine questions they plan to ask ahead of time.

Assignment: Submit the interview questions that guided the conversation and a 1 – 2 page summary of the overall knowledge you gained from the experience. Make sure to include specific answers for the following questions:

- What did you find useful for your future career/academic considerations?
- How will you incorporate this knowledge into your life?

Resources:

Potential Interview Questions:

- Describe your career path?
- What aspects of your role are most rewarding to you?
- What advice would you give to a new professional entering this particular industry?
- Who are your mentors?
- What industry trend keeps you up at night?
- What mistake did you learn the most from in your professional career?
- If you had an extra hour of free time in the day, how would you spend it (for work purposes)?
- Who do you listen to or what do you read to learn?

Things to Remember:

- **Respect their time** – Go through the proper channels to request a meeting and schedule a time for the conversation, and be on time. If you are scheduled for 15 minutes, watch the clock and do not run over your allotted time. Be mindful and respectful.
- **Be flexible** – It's great to have these conversations in person, but depending on the company culture and who you are reaching out to, offer to do a phone interview or video chat in lieu of an in-person meeting if that is more convenient for them.
- **Thank them** – Thank them directly after the conversation and also following up with a hand-written note or email describing why the conversation was helpful for you.
- **Be prepared** – Make sure to bring your prepared questions with you and something to write with or take notes on. This will help you later when you write your thank you and summary.
- **Link up!** – Great job! You've just made a connection. Make sure to link with this individual on your LinkedIn account or company communication channels. If they are open to it, you could keep the conversation going and turn your new connection into a mentorship opportunity.

3. Weekly Journal Entries -----

Weekly journal entries can serve as a way to reflect *frequently* on learning objectives. Journal entries are also a great way for students to record the details of their internship *as* they experience it. If reflection is pushed until the very end, many times the student cannot recall all of the learning that took place.

Directions: Submit a journal entry for each week of your internship. *Specific dates and submission instructions can be worked out with your faculty internship advisor.

Assignment: Journal entries should contain both summary and reflection. Students can share summaries of the tasks and projects they are completing, but they should also incorporate reflection. Journal entries are a great way to reflect on the progress of learning goals, record new insights on what it means to work in a professional setting, document new connections, comment on new concepts learned, and everything in between. Journal entries should be at least (*insert desired length here – we suggest 2 paragraphs, or about 150 – 200 words*) in length.

*You may also provide the student with a journal prompt each week if more structure is desired. Use the list of reflection questions for inscription.

4. Oral Presentations -----

Oral presentations are a great way for students to gather and formulate their ideas and further develop their speaking skills. Presentations can be presented to just the faculty internship advisor, or groups – perspective interns or additional faculty/internship coordinators.

Directions: Work with your faculty internship advisor to schedule a time to present your final oral presentation. *Specific dates and submission instructions can be worked out individually

Assignment: Develop a presentation to describe your internship experience and articulate the learning that took place. Successful presentations will be well-rehearsed, contain specific examples (pictures and/or artifacts are encouraged), and showcase personal growth and development that took place throughout the experience.

5. Portfolio -----

A final portfolio is good for objective documentation. It is a collection of artifacts that thoroughly document the work an intern has done and the skills and knowledge they acquired. Portfolios can provide future employers evidence of work a student has done, or can simply be referred to during the interview process or cover letters.

Options to include in portfolios:

- Internship official position description
- Weekly logs – list of dates and hours worked, tasks engaged in, etc.
- Learning objectives or goals for the experience
- Samples of finished products from the internships – these pieces should be preceded by a summary sheet that explains the document
 - Examples to include:
 - Reports
 - Brochures
 - Agendas
 - Proposals
 - Photographs
 - Memos
 - Notes from Lunch & Learns or other professional development opportunities
 - Newsletters
 - Graphic design projects/digital images
 - Certificates
 - Newspaper articles or blogs
 - Thank you notes or notes from colleagues
- Revised resume – this should include details from your current internship
- Sample cover letter for future job – this should incorporate details from your current internship
- Final reflective essay