

Radford University

Department of Criminal Justice

Internship Manual

Criminal Justice Internships

Radford University

Purpose

Internship experiences in the field of criminal justice serve multiple purposes. The criminal justice intern will develop self-directed learning skills, will gain a better understanding and appreciation of knowledge gained in the classroom, and will be exposed to and better understand the complexities of the criminal justice system (McBride, 1990).¹ Toward that goal, the following is a list of goals and objectives of the criminal justice internship:

- A. To provide the criminal justice intern with insight into the day-to-day activities of criminal justice agencies and to provide a realistic perspective of the complex nature of such agencies.
- B. To provide the intern a greater appreciation of knowledge gained in the classroom and a realization of the importance of that knowledge as it applies to the administration of criminal justice.
- C. To provide the interning student with a sense of career orientation by creating a heightened sense of desire for their chosen field.
- D. To enable the student to assess his/her skills and abilities against tasks of real-work situations.

Interning in criminal justice agencies may also serve to provide the student with connections for future employment opportunities or simply help the intern decide on a specific area of interest. CRJU internships are typically **not** paid positions.

¹ McBride, R. B., & Gordon, G. R. (1990). *Criminal Justice Internships*. Cincinnati: Anderson.

Who Is Eligible?

To be eligible for a criminal justice internship, a student must be of junior or senior standing and should have a cumulative **GPA of 2.5**. Students with less than a 2.5 GPA, but at least a 2.3 GPA (overall), may still be considered for an internship. Students with less than a 2.5 GPA may apply for a waiver of this requirement under the following circumstances: 1) they have a strong letter from a CRJU faculty member (other than the internship coordinator), 2) there is not a very high demand from students for internships during the semester for which the waiver is sought, and 3) the internship coordinator approves the request. A student desiring such a waiver must request the letter from the faculty member in writing. The letter requesting the recommendation must provide the faculty member with enough information about the student's situation and accomplishments to justify such a waiver. The fact that the student wants to do an internship or believes that the internship is needed in order to satisfy career goals will not be sufficient justification for waiver of the academic standards. Internships are reserved for our better students, and while exceptions may be made occasionally to the academic requirements, there must be strong justifications for doing so. CRJU 100 is a **prerequisite** to the criminal justice internship, and students must have completed **21 semester hours** in the criminal justice major to be eligible for a criminal justice internship. It is our experience that some students find it difficult to return to academic life at the University following a stimulating internship. For that reason, it is often desirable to take the internship during the student's last semester prior to graduation. Exceptions to the eligibility requirements may be made on a case-by-case basis by the internship coordinator.

Students from majors other than CRJU may also be eligible for internships in criminal justice agencies with the permission of the internship coordinator, a 2.5 GPA, and junior or senior status; however, preference is given to criminal justice majors. If the demand for internships is very

high for a particular semester, non-criminal justice majors may not be permitted to do the internship.

Many agencies do not accept interns who have been convicted of criminal offenses; therefore, students with **criminal records** should discuss this with the faculty coordinator prior to applying for an internship position. In addition, many criminal justice agencies require background investigations, which entail considerable pre-planning.

How To Get An Internship

A student's first step in getting an internship is to consider personal **career** aspirations. After making a general decision about the student's field of interest (e.g., corrections, courts, or law enforcement), a more specific decision must be made about the **type of agency** in which the student wishes to work. This decision can often be complex, and the student may not be fully aware of the possibilities available to him/her. If this occurs, the student should seek advice from either the internship coordinator or the student's academic advisor.

The second decision to be made in getting an internship is **where** the student would like to do the internship. Some students may choose to remain at school while interning, while others may decide to seek an internship near home or some other location.

Thirdly, after a student has made the decisions on the type and location of agency in which to do the internship, the student should make an appointment to **meet with the internship coordinator** to discuss the student's intentions. The internship coordinator must approve potential site agencies **before any contact is made with that agency**.

(Historically, CRJU students have tended to believe that they may easily acquire Federal internships and, consequently, Federal jobs. Students should be aware that few Federal internship positions actually exist, and these are filled on a very competitive basis.)

The fourth step in acquiring an internship is to contact the agency of interest. Occasionally,

the internship coordinator will initiate this contact, but in most instances, this is the responsibility of the student. This initial contact should answer the following questions:

1. Does the agency provide internship opportunities?
2. If not, would the agency consider an internship program?
3. Are there any special conditions associated with the agency's internship program?
4. Would the agency be willing to interview the student for an internship position? If so, an appointment for an interview should be set up.

The internship position **interview** is crucially important, and the student should be prepared to ask questions and to show genuine interest in the agency. The student should wear appropriate professional attire for the interview.

After receiving a response from these preliminary contacts, the student should notify the internship coordinator. After both the agency and the student have made initial commitments, a **Radford University Internship Agreement** form must be completed, signed by the student and agency, and returned to the coordinator to sign. This agreement form is now available in a digital format through Handshake. After all parties have approved the Agreement through Handshake, students will be registered for the course. Students do not register themselves for internships in OneCampus as they do for other classes. The student will be billed in accordance with university tuition rates.

When to Begin the Process

Ordinarily, students should begin the process of acquiring an internship one full semester before the desired time of placement. Students interested in Federal internship placements may need to begin the process as early as two semesters before placement. CRJU internships may be scheduled during any semester.

How Many Credits is an Internship?

Internships vary from **6 - 15 credit hours**, depending on the needs of the student and the agency. All internships are graded on a **pass/fail** basis.

Credits	Hours of Direct Agency Contact
6	224
7	261
8	299
9	336
10	373
11	411
12	448
13	485
14	523
15	560

These hours of agency contact are minimum requirements to earn the desired credits and can be scheduled in any manner suitable to both the agency and the student. It is recommended, however, that students should not work less than 4-hour blocks of time, and ideally will be working 8-hour days. For example, a student completing a 15-credit internship should work 8 hours per day, 5 days per week, for 14 weeks to fulfill the 560-hour requirement. A student completing a 6-credit internship will ideally work 8 hours per day, 2 days per week, for 14 weeks to fulfill the 224-hour requirement. Although these schedules would be ideal, the student can arrange any combination of hours and days with the agency to fulfill the minimum number of required hours

(within reason).

Types of Agencies

The types of agencies where a student can complete a CRJU internship are extensive and are largely determined by the student. Typically, however, CRJU internships are completed in the areas of courts, law enforcement, or corrections. Historically, students have completed internships in the following agencies:

Law Enforcement:

- Municipal police department
- U.S. Marshals – in certain areas in VA
- U.S. Customs
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives

Courts:

- Commonwealth Attorney's offices
- Public defenders' offices
- Private attorneys' offices
- Women's resource centers; victim-witness programs, domestic assault centers

Corrections:

- Correctional facilities: juvenile and adult
- State probation/parole offices; some Federal offices
- Department of Corrections in Roanoke

Personal/Professional Responsibilities of CRJU Interns

Agencies that host criminal justice internships place great emphasis on the need for confidentiality, privacy, and personal integrity. Therefore, for a student to successfully complete an internship with a criminal justice agency, the student must be able to demonstrate high levels of maturity and integrity. Additionally, CRJU interns must possess the emotional stability necessary to deal with the kind of unpleasant situations that are occasionally encountered in the criminal justice system. To facilitate a good rapport with the chosen agency, interns must also have good

listening and interpersonal skills.

In addition to possessing these personality traits, all CRJU interns must abide by the following rules:

1. Always dress appropriately.
2. Do not use profanity, regardless of what others are doing.
3. Always be on time and do not leave early.
4. Do NOT allow yourself to be put into dangerous situations.
5. Do not become involved in gossip.
6. Ask questions and show enthusiasm.
7. Do not discuss sensitive information with non-agency people.
8. Do not become argumentative or disrespectful.
9. Be honest and forthright about any unusual situations.
10. NEVER, EVER, AT ANY TIME CARRY A PERSONAL FIREARM TO YOUR INTERNSHIP SITE.
11. Never engage in client-facing activities without being accompanied by an agency employee and/or supervisor.

Mutual Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of the internship agency is to permit the student to observe the central functions of the agency. Other responsibilities of the internship agency are to schedule the student's work, to mentor and direct the student's work, to evaluate the intern's work, and to ensure that the intern's experience is productive.

It is the responsibility of the student to immediately contact the internship coordinator if the student believes that the agency is not fulfilling major programmatic responsibilities or if other issues arise that are deemed to be serious by the student. While no simple solutions exist for these types of problems, the internship coordinator will work with the student to remedy the situation.

Conversely, should a student fail to fulfill his/her responsibilities, the **internship may be terminated**. Examples of infractions that may require action include: failing to show up for assignments, engaging in behavior deemed inappropriate by the agency, engaging in illegal or immoral behavior as determined by the agency, or not performing duties as requested by the

agency.

Experiences

While interning, a student should experience (or at least observe) a variety of activities. The following is a brief list of some of the experiences an intern can expect to have while working with the various agencies.

Police:

- Observe/participate in routine patrol
- Observe Dispatch/Communication centers
- Observe/participate in CID (criminal investigative division)
- Observe/participate in crime prevention (DARE)
- Observe Records/Administrative functions
- Assist agency administration in preparing reports and other administrative duties/projects as requested

Probation/Parole:

- Observe case supervision
- Observe/participate in records check
- Observe/participate in pre-sentence and post-sentence reports
- Observe court
- Observe intensive probation supervision
- Assist agency administration in preparing reports and other administrative duties/projects as requested

Institutional Corrections:

- Observe/participate in the work of a corrections counselor
- Observe correctional officers
- Observe administrative functions
- Observe parole hearings/grievance hearings/other processes that are integral to the functioning of the institution
- Assist agency administration in preparing reports and other administrative duties/projects as requested

Commonwealth Attorney, Public Defender, Private Attorney:

- Observe activities of supervising attorney
- Observe client/attorney meetings
- Observe police/attorney meetings

- Observe intradepartmental staff meetings
- Perform legal research to the extent requested
- Observe court proceedings
- Assist in special legal projects as requested by the agency

Federal Agencies:

- Will be worked out on an individual basis with the individual agency

U.S. Marshal:

- Observe the activities of the Deputy U.S. Marshal
- Observe/participate in field work with U.S. Marshal
- Participate in Federal prisoner transports
- Observe Federal courtroom security
- Observe/participate to the extent possible in special projects or work being performed by the regional office of the U.S. Marshal's Office

Women's Resource Centers:

- Participate/interact on a regular basis with agency clients
- Observe court
- Assist/observe professional caseworkers to the extent possible
- Assist agency administration in preparing reports and other administrative duties/projects as requested
- Assist/observe with agency hotlines and emergency lines

In criminal justice, all agencies are different and, therefore, it is impossible to delineate in great detail the responsibilities and the role an intern will play in a respective agency. In general, students should observe the professional work of an agency and, to the extent possible, participate in that agency's work. While it is realized that from time to time an intern will be asked to answer phones, and perhaps provide the agency with some other secretarial assistance, it is important for the agency to understand that these types of tasks should be the exception rather than the rule, and should not occur on a frequent basis. Under no circumstances should a student intern carry out field visits, private client interactions, and/or other client-facing activities alone. Student interns must be accompanied by an agency employee and/or agency supervisor when conducting any client-facing

activities.

Assignments and Evaluations

In addition to working the required number of hours, student interns must fulfill several other requirements.

1. **Journal**: Kept daily – at least one page per day; relating to the activities of the day (when on the internship site). The journal is a formal reflection on your internship experience, not a diary! Entries should demonstrate thought about the particular experiences of that day. It may reflect on encounters with other criminal justice professionals, offenders, or issues within the agency where you are working. The journal provides an opportunity to openly express opinions about internship experiences. The journal should **not** be shared with the site supervisor unless specifically required by the agency. The journal is the student's independent, confidential record of internship experiences. For this reason, it may be desirable to work on the journal somewhere other than the internship site. The journal will be submitted weekly to a Discussion Post in D2L.
2. **Interact**: Interact with the internship coordinator every 2-3 weeks; make note of meeting time/date in journal. This coordination can be accomplished by an office visit, by telephone, or by e-mail; however, it must be done on a regular basis! **Leaving a message on an answering machine is not sufficient**; it is the student's responsibility to persist until the contact is made and acknowledged.
3. **Textbook**: Student interns must purchase a textbook that includes questions that the student must answer in writing. Some of these answers will be submitted early in the semester, and the remaining answers will be submitted near the end of the semester. (The student will be provided a course syllabus at the beginning of the semester that will specify the textbook,

the pages to be read in the textbook, the questions to be answered, and applicable due dates).

4. **Evaluation:** At mid-term and at the conclusion of the internship, the agency site supervisor will fill out an evaluation form on the student. It is the student's responsibility to see that the evaluation is completed and submitted by the time designated in the course syllabus (or by the deadline established in consultation with the internship coordinator – see the note below). There is a link to the evaluation form on the internship website.
5. **Interview:** At mid-term, the student will conduct an interview with an employee of the agency and submit a written summary.

(**NOTE:** If the student's work schedule is such that the student will not have worked about half of the student's total hours for the semester by mid-semester, the internship coordinator and the student will determine another date for submission of all material required to be submitted at mid-term).

Criminal Justice Graduate Internships

Graduate internships are also available. To be eligible for a graduate internship, the student must be a current graduate student and in good standing.

How Many Credits is a Graduate Internship?

Internships are **3 credit hours**. Internships are graded on a **pass/fail** basis.

Credits	Hours of Direct Agency Contact
3	224

These hours of agency contact are minimum requirements to earn the desired credits and can be scheduled in any manner suitable to both the agency and the student. It is recommended, however, that students should complete no less than 16 hours per week for 14 weeks.

Additional Requirements of Graduate Internships

Graduate interns must also submit a paper at the end of the semester to the internship coordinator discussing lessons learned from the internship experience. The paper may draw extensively on journal entries (without being limited to this source of information) to discuss what the student has learned about themselves during the internship experience. This part of the paper should examine the intern's strengths and weaknesses as observed while working at the agency and discuss ways for improvement. In addition, the paper will discuss strong points and/or weaknesses in the law, the agency, and/or the criminal justice system based on observations during the internship and suggest ways in which the weaknesses might be improved or overcome.