

1995-1996

INTERNSHIP GUIDE

**FOR
UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE
PROGRAMS IN**

**SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION**

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Scientific and Technical Communication Internship Guide

Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	2
<i>Getting started</i>	3
<i>Registering for internship credit</i>	4
<i>Adviser involvement</i>	5
<i>Internship proposal</i>	6
<i>Internship journal</i>	7
<i>Final report</i>	11
<i>Checklist</i>	13

Scientific and Technical Communication Program

Internship Guide

Introduction

The internship is a very important part of your STC program because it allows you to take your classroom skills and knowledge out into the workplace and apply them in a practical work environment. Through the internship you'll learn what it's like to work as a technical communicator in a business setting and what it means to belong to an organization. You will gain practical experience in working with and for others. You may also discover new strengths about yourself and uncover areas that need improvement. The internship experience may help you reach decisions about the type of technical communication work you would like to pursue and often leads to job offers after graduation.

All undergraduate and graduate students in the Scientific and Technical Communication program are required to complete one internship experience as part of their degree program.

Note to undergraduates: You cannot enroll in an internship until you are officially accepted into the major and are no longer a pre-major.

Note to graduates: Graduate students who have had experience in the technical communication field are not required to complete an internship. Talk with your adviser about these exemptions.

Getting started: How do I locate an internship site?

Begin your search for an internship well in advance of the quarter in which you plan to complete it. Internship opportunities are posted regularly on the STC bulletin board outside of 201 Haecker Hall. Check the board frequently for internships. The department also keeps a file of previous internship listings, which you can use as a reference source for company names and contacts who have requested our students in the past. Ask the STC program secretary in 201 Haecker Hall for assistance. Jean Underwood, Coordinator of Career Services for the College of Agriculture, also has useful information regarding internships. Ms. Underwood is located in 272 Coffey Hall, phone # 624-2710.

You should also ask other STC majors about internships they may have had or have heard of because networking is often an excellent way to locate your ideal position. Attending the meetings of professional societies such as the Society for Technical Communication or the Medical Writers Association may provide leads on possible positions. Don't forget to check the want-ads for openings that you may be able to fashion into an internship experience. Also, don't overlook volunteer positions as internships, either. You may find one that particularly meets your needs and interests.

Your adviser can help you locate internship possibilities as well as assist you with refining job search documents: a resume, cover letter, reference lists, and marketing portfolio. Also, talk with your adviser about a reasonable salary range and stick with this. Do not sell yourself short as you have many valuable skills to offer an employer!

After you have assembled your job search documents, contact potential internship employers for interviews. During an interview, discuss the functions and responsibilities of the internship position with the internship employer. Once you have made your decision on the internship position you will need to describe these functions and responsibilities in your internship proposal (discussed on page 6).

How do I register for internship credit?

In order to register for Rhetoric 5180, Internship in Technical Communication, you must complete the following steps:

- First, go to the Rhetoric Department main office in 201 Haecker Hall and ask the receptionist for a special course registration form.
- Then, schedule an appointment with your adviser to discuss your prospective internship site and job description. If your adviser approves, she or he will sign the special course registration form and sign a registration override permit. Your adviser does not expect a detailed internship proposal at this point, but does need a general idea of what the internship proposal will contain.
- Return the special course registration form to the Rhetoric Department receptionist. This will be filed in the office so the department can keep track of internship paperwork.
- You can then register for Rhetoric 5180, Internship in Technical Communication, at Coffey Hall following the usual registration procedure. Remember, you will need the registration override permit to register for internship credit!

You can enroll in more than one internship as long as you have not completed a maximum of 6 internship credits. For example, you could choose to work at two internships over two different quarters and receive 4 credits for one and two credits for another.

What other involvement will my adviser have in the internship process?

Your adviser can help you define your educational objectives for the internship proposal and help you understand internship expectations. You should meet with your adviser at least twice throughout your internship experience to discuss your progress toward meeting these objectives and expectations. Use this meeting time to discuss insights, joys, fears, problems, and your internship journal/final report.

Toward the end of your internship, you must request a final evaluation letter from your supervisor. Your adviser needs this evaluation to complete your internship grading. Without this letter your internship is incomplete and you will not receive credit for the experience.

The Internship Experience

The internship is an experiential learning project. To help you document your internship experience and learning and receive class credit, we ask you to submit the following:

- Internship proposal
- Internship journal
- Final report
- Evaluation letter from internship supervisor

At the end of your internship, you will submit both the internship journal and your final report to your adviser.

The Internship Proposal

Soon after accepting a position, develop and write an internship proposal and present it to your adviser. It should be completed before you begin your internship. The proposal should include the following information:

- The internship position and the name of your internship supervisor, company address, and workplace phone number.
- The duties that you will perform.
(You do not need to know every function/task that you will perform for approval of your internship proposal. Give your adviser as clear a description as possible at this point.)
- The length of the internship and number of credit hours.
(30 hours of work generally equal one credit. Because you have to pay for credits, you may opt to work for more hours at your internship than you receive credit for.)
- Your educational objectives, such as what you hope to learn, produce, and accomplish in this internship experience.

This proposal is also a contract between you and your adviser. It defines your internship responsibilities and the objectives you and your adviser have decided need to be met in order to successfully complete the internship. Negotiate any modifications to the proposal with your adviser if conditions change as the internship progresses.

The Internship Journal

Your internship is a rich, experiential learning experience. To focus your attention on that learning, your adviser will ask you to keep an internship journal in which you should write regularly (at least one page, two to three times a week) about your experiences. A spiral-bound notebook works well as a journal. Be sure to date all of your entries.

Before the end of the internship you will prepare a final report in which you examine what you learned through your internship and what your relationship with your employer and co-workers was like. Your journal entries will provide much of the information you will need for your report.

A good way to structure your journal is to use your first entry to project what you expect to learn in each area before you actually begin the internship. Then, during the internship you can write about your real work experiences in each area. At the end of the internship, you can compare your actual experiences with your earlier expectations.

The following are some guidelines for you to use in monitoring your learning as you write in your journal. You can assess your progress in the seven general categories of learning by asking yourself the specific questions listed and responding to them in your journal. You'll find that most of the questions apply to your internship experiences, though some may not. As your internship progresses, some questions will seem more relevant than others.

General job competencies

Developing broad abilities such as facilitating, advocating, organizing, interviewing, layout, editing, design, problem solving, etc.

- What are you learning about how to get something done in an office or in the community?
- Are you becoming conscious of the steps involved in decision making? How so?
- Can you describe any specific situations involving you or others that presented a problem? How were they resolved? Or, why were they not resolved?
- In what ways are you becoming aware of the difficulty of solving certain problems?

Career exploration

Understanding the work of professionals in a career area and gaining awareness of possible job opportunities.

- In what ways does this experience confirm or modify your ideas and plans for a career as a technical communicator?
- What do you think makes a person working in this area truly “professional”?
- What suggestions do you have for another student considering your internship position?

Interpersonal skills

Learning how to communicate effectively with others; how to listen well; how to read non-verbal signs; how to be tactful in conversations, etc.

- Are you developing the ability to work with others, especially those who are quite different from you? In what ways?
- Are you developing an understanding of the values, feelings, and attitudes of the people you work with? How so?
- Are you improving your speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities? How?

Responsibility

Learning to organize and manage your own time; understanding and defining your limits and values.

- Are your experiences conflicting with or clarifying any personal values? In what ways?
- What are you learning about your strengths and weaknesses in this kind of position and environment?
- Does this experience affect your attitude about yourself in any way? Does it affect your attitudes toward others?

Research skills

Locating information and resource persons; organizing and synthesizing information gathered from various sources.

- What information sources are you using or developing on the job? Are there others you have not tried? Why not?
- What frustrations do you encounter while trying to gather information you need? How do you overcome these frustrations?
- What have you learned about working with people to define problems, collect information, carry out decisions, and so forth?
- What have you learned about how to synthesize and evaluate information?

Employment-academic relations

Understanding how your internship relates to your academic experiences; finding ways to improve relations between the two.

- What are you learning about a particular field of study, such as government, social science, media, medical technology, etc.?
- Can you identify one or more ideas or principles from your course studies that have been illuminated or tested through your internship experiences?

- What academic courses do you want to take as a follow-up to your internship?
Why?
- What in your academic background has been most helpful in preparing you for this internship?

Position assessment

Formulating opinions on the value of this internship.

- To what extent has this experience fulfilled or not fulfilled your expectations?
- What thoughts or questions do you have in mind as you look ahead to further work experiences?
- What improvements in the organization might you suggest to your employer?
- What improvements in the nature of this internship might you suggest?

The Final Report

Your final report should be addressed to your adviser. The final report should include an introduction, body, and conclusion. Make the body of the report no longer than five pages in length. The final report should contain an executive summary of your experiences and should highlight what you learned and what it means for your future career. Use headings, subheadings, and lists to facilitate reading of your report. Choose your own organization for the report (this could include headings from your internship journal). Attach appendices that include samples of technical writing or other work completed during the internship. Remember, your internship journal should provide much of the information and reflection required in the final report.

Specific internship issues that you may want to address in your final report are:

- What tasks did you perform as part of your internship?
- What did you accomplish?
- What did you learn about applied work in technical communication?
- What did you learn about the culture of the organization you worked for?
- What were the positive aspects of your experience? What were the negatives?
- What did you learn about yourself? About others?
- What strengths did you realize you possess? What areas need improvement?
- Has your coursework prepared you for your internship? What additional academic skills do you feel you need to obtain before graduation?

The Final Report, continued

Submit one copy of your final report to your adviser. Submit a second copy to the coordinator of the STC program. This report must be submitted before internship credit will be given. Your report will also be circulated to other students and faculty in the program for reference information; therefore, your report must reflect the standards of professionalism in scientific and technical communication, both in content and presentation.

Also, do not forget that your internship is not complete and you will not receive a grade until your adviser receives an evaluation letter from your internship supervisor. You are responsible for notifying your internship supervisor of this requirement. Have your supervisor send the letter to your adviser at the Rhetoric Department.

Checklist

In summary, to complete the internship and receive credit for the experience, you need to complete the following:

Getting Started

- ___ 1) Locate an internship
- ___ 2) Obtain special course registration form in 201 Haecker Hall
- ___ 3) See adviser to sign
 - special course registration form
 - registration override permit
- ___ 4) Return to 201 Haecker Hall
 - submit special course registration form
- ___ 5) Register for Rhetoric 5180, Internship in Technical Communication, at Coffey Hall (as part of your regular registration)
 - submit override permit

The Internship Experience

- ___ Job proposal
- ___ Internship journal
- ___ Final report
- ___ Evaluation letter from internship supervisor