

# **Sustainability Internship Handbook**

**August 2022**

## Overview

The internship is a vital component of the BA in Sustainability program at the University of Louisville. The internship is a guided work experience designed to give students a realistic exposure to issues in the sustainability arena through a sustainability-focused position in a government, non-profit, or appropriate private sponsoring organization. The sustainability internship is carried out under the direction of both an on-site organization mentor and the BA program director (or faculty supervisor). The internship must include a minimum of 150 hours over a period of approximately one full academic semester. The intern is required to keep a journal and submit a final reflection paper at the completion of the internship period. This applied learning experience offers the intern an opportunity to integrate and employ the skills and knowledge accumulated during the academic program of study.

The student should demonstrate achievement of program core competencies by linking the internship experience to many or all of the following identified learning outcomes for the BA in Sustainability degree, in which students can:

- Understand, conceptualize and analyze sustainability problems and issues in a holistic way;
- Develop a deeper understanding of the basic concepts in sustainability and the disciplines which encompass it, which can assist with real-world problem solving;
- Evaluate the role of social institutions and the political, legal, and cultural frameworks for sustainability;
- Acquire methods and techniques to explore and analyze issues that cross disciplinary boundaries;
- Understand ethical perspectives for issues related to sustainability;
- Develop skills that will facilitate creative, innovative, and workable solutions to sustainability problems.

This handbook is designed to answer questions that students may have on the structure and timeline of the internship. It is meant to assist you in early preparation for the internship component of your coursework. Read the handbook thoroughly, and direct any questions you may have to the program director. The forms necessary to register for and complete the internship are included at the end of this handbook.

## Sustainability Internship Requirements

The student applying for the sustainability internship must:

- Be a second-semester sophomore, junior, or senior majoring in Sustainability;
- Have a minimum of 45 credit hours;
- Have completed SUST 101, SUST 201, SUST 202, and SUST 301;
- Have a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5.

The internship position must:

- Be a paid or unpaid experience related to sustainability;
- Have, for its majority, higher level functionality than clerical/administrative;
- Be a minimum of 12 weeks in length (it's helpful if the dates of the internship coincide with the semester or academic calendar, but this is not required);
- Be at least 150 hours in total;
- Be approved by the program director.

The program director will register the student intern in SUST 404 during the semester in which the internship begins. Internships may be completed in Spring, Summer, or Fall semesters.

## Application Process

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

1. **ONE FULL SEMESTER BEFORE** the anticipated start of the internship the student should begin researching potential internship opportunities. Internships may exist within UofL, at local nonprofit agencies, or within local governments. In many cases organizations may be willing to take on student interns even if a formal internship program or position doesn't currently exist. The student may wish to contact possible internship locations to introduce themselves and describe what the internship encompasses. Because one of the goals of the internship is to create a pathway to a career, the student should consider internships within organizations in which they would ultimately like to work. A list of organizations in which students have interned in the past is included on Page 7 of this handbook.
2. **THE SEMESTER BEFORE** the anticipated start of the internship the student should correspond with the program director to discuss registration. At this point the student should have, at the least, some idea of the organization or type of organization in which they would like to intern. If the student does not have a concrete opportunity in mind, the program director will assist the student in identifying appropriate internship prospects.
3. Once the sponsoring organization and internship has been identified, the intern and their mentor at the organization should complete the "Sustainability Internship Agreement". This form is available at the end of this handbook.

4. The student should fill out the “SUST 404 Registration Form”. This form is available at the end of this handbook.
5. The internship agreement and registration form should be returned to the program director. The program director will review the details of the internship and register the student in the course.

## Responsibilities of the Student

The internship not only provides a valuable learning experience to complement the academic curriculum, but can also play a critical role in the development of career opportunities. Internships require both professional conduct and responsibility. The student’s performance will be evaluated and it is important to conform to standards of professional behavior including appropriate dress, attitude, attendance, and punctuality. During the course of the internship period, the intern is responsible for following the policies and rules of the sponsoring organization. Questions about this should be directed to the internship mentor.

The sponsoring agency should meet the same professional standards. If the student has any concerns during their internship, they should be brought to the attention of the program director.

### *Checklist of Student Responsibilities:*

- Obtain and review this *Internship Handbook*.
- Identify an appropriate internship organization. Contact the organization about potential internship opportunities, and provide them with a cover letter and resume.
- Correspond with the program director for approval of the internship, or for assistance in identifying an internship.
- Confirm internship dates, hours, and responsibilities with internship mentor and complete the internship agreement form. Submit form to the program director.
- Complete internship registration form. Submit form to the program director.
- Complete a minimum of 150 internship hours.

**BY THE FINAL DAY OF CLASSES OF THE SEMESTER IN WHICH THE STUDENT IS REGISTERED FOR SUST 404**, the student should submit to the program director their internship log and final reflection paper. The student should also assure that the internship mentor has submitted the mentor evaluation form. These materials should be emailed to the program director. The internship log is simply a daily/weekly rundown of activities completed during the internship, including brief reflections on how they relate to sustainability issues. The reflection paper is discussed in detail on Page 6 of this handbook.

## Responsibilities of the Internship Mentor

The sponsoring organization must be a legal entity. A representative of the sponsoring organization must sign the internship agreement to serve as the internship mentor. The mentor should:

- Discuss the internship responsibilities and be available to answer questions and offer guidance to the intern.
- Provide the intern with a suitable work environment.
- When necessary, hold conferences with the intern to discuss their progress in meeting the objectives of the internship.
- Complete the final mentor evaluation and return it to the program director. The evaluation form will be provided by the student and is available at the end of this handbook.

## Responsibilities of the Faculty Advisor/Program Director

The program director will typically serve as the faculty advisor to the intern, although there may be cases in which the director will determine a more appropriate faculty supervisor. The faculty advisor will seek to assist in obtaining internships, act as a resource for the intern during the internship, and serve as a liaison between the intern and the sponsoring organization if necessary. At the completion of the internship, the faculty supervisor will grade the reflection paper and journal.

## Program Director (Contact)

Dr. Matthew H. Ruther, Associate Professor  
Department of Urban and Public Affairs  
Office: UPA Building Room 123F  
Email: [matthew.ruther@louisville.edu](mailto:matthew.ruther@louisville.edu)

## Reflection Paper Guidelines

The internship paper should reflect a student's ability to integrate essential theoretical classroom and research experiences with the body of applied skills attained during the internship. The paper should demonstrate the student's grasp of sustainability theories, concepts, methods, and issues by relating them to aspects of the working context in which the student participated. The purpose of the paper is *not* to provide a narrative review of day-to-day job duties, nor a sequential course-by-course review of the student's classroom experience. Rather it is to demonstrate the student's ability to synthesize and apply what is relevant in this broad interdisciplinary field so as to acquire a more complete comprehension of the tasks that they performed, their role in the organization, and the organization's place within a larger social sustainability context.

The reflection paper should use a conventional term paper format, and should be between 3,000-5,000 words. The specific objective and thesis of the paper should be clearly stated. A title page and a list of reference materials consulted should be included. A standard citation style should be used consistently within the paper, preferably with the author's name and date of publication in parentheses directly after the material cited, and an alphabetical list of references at the conclusion of the paper. The organization of the paper should follow the general outline below:

- I. Introduction: Description of the organization, including information on organization function, staff, finances, and relationship with other organization/companies. Brief description of the student's duties and responsibilities.
- II. Sustainability issues to be examined: A discussion of sustainability issues in the organization, citing the sustainability literature and an explanation of its relevance to the internship.
- III. Discussion and analysis: An examination of the activities and functions of the company/organization, with reference to the relevant literature. Did the company/organization act as the literature predicted it would? Why or why not?
- IV. Linkage of internship with stated learning outcomes: A discussion of how the experience aligned with the student's coursework in helping the student achieve the learning outcomes identified on Page 2 of this handbook.
- V. Conclusions: A discussion of insights into the practice of sustainable urban planning gained from this experience. What aspects of the literature were most/least useful in understanding the operation of the organization?

## Potential Internship Locations

The following list includes some of the organizations or agencies that Sustainability interns have worked at in the past. Note that this list is not exhaustive and that individual organizations may no longer offer internships or have internships currently available. Students should use this list as a guide in identifying the types of organizations in which they might want to work.

Backside Learning Center  
Bike Louisville  
Brightside  
Catholic Charities  
Envirome Institute  
Global Cool Cities Alliance  
Kentucky Cabinet of Energy and Environment  
Kentucky Waterways Alliance  
Louisville Grows  
Louisville Metro Advanced Planning and Sustainability  
Louisville Metro Parks and Recreation  
Louisville Metro Planning and Design  
Louisville Nature Center  
Louisville Zoo  
Organic Association of Kentucky  
Partnership for a Green City  
Passionist Earth and Spirit Center  
Second Chance Wildlife  
ULI Kentucky  
UofL Free Store  
UofL Sustainability Council

- Bike Mechanic Intern
- Campus Apiarist
- Campus Gardens Intern
- Carbon Accounting Intern
- Communications Intern
- Community Composting Intern
- EcoReps Intern
- HSC Green Team
- Renewable Energy Intern
- Sustainability Assessment Intern
- Sustainable Dining Intern
- Zero Waste Intern

Westrock Recycling  
World Affairs Council

# Urban and Public Affairs

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## SUSTAINABILITY INTERN AGREEMENT

<b>Student Name:</b>	
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<b>Internship Mentor Name:</b>	
<b>Organization/Company:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	

<b>Anticipated Start Date:</b>	
<b>Anticipated End Date:</b>	
<b>Anticipated Hours/Week:</b>	
<b>General Duties:</b>	

- The intern is currently a student in the Sustainability program at the University of Louisville.
- The intern will have a mentor at the organization in which they work, as well as a faculty supervisor from the Department of Urban and Public Affairs.
- The intern and the internship mentor will both strive to develop an effective working relationship, with the mentor providing an appropriate level of support and encouragement to the intern.
- The internship mentor will make every effort to ensure that the interning student participates in as many facets as possible of the work within their area of responsibility.
- The internship mentor will allow the intern to observe or contribute, when feasible, in decision-making processes in which the mentor participates.
- Administrative tasks, when necessary, should be incidental to the main duties of the intern.
- The internship mentor will complete a brief evaluation at the end of the internship and return it to the faculty supervisor.
- The mentor evaluation, internship log, and final reflection paper are due to the faculty supervisor by the last day of classes of the semester in which the student is enrolled in SUST 404 (internship).

<b>Student Intern:</b>	
<b>Internship Mentor:</b>	
<b>Faculty Supervisor:</b>	

**UNDERGRADUATE APPLICATION FOR  
ENROLLMENT IN AN INDEPENDENT STUDY,  
INTERNSHIP, OR RESEARCH COURSE**

**SUSTAINABILITY INTERN  
REGISTRATION FORM**

Student \_\_\_\_\_ School of Enrollment A&S

Student ID# \_\_\_\_\_ Dept/Course \_\_\_\_\_ Credit hours \_\_\_\_\_

Independent Study                      Internship                      Research                      Senior Thesis

Semester:    Fall                      Spring                      Summer                      Year \_\_\_\_\_  
(Term?)

Plan of work, including a description of the project and how the student will be evaluated:

<b>Course Title</b> (limited to 30 total characters)
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**Signatures**

<b>Instructor</b>		Instructor's Printed Name and ID#
<b>Undergraduate/ Graduate Advisor</b>		Prerequisites: <span style="float: right;">met      waived</span>
<b>Department Chair</b>		
<b>Dean's Office</b>		

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## SUSTAINABILITY INTERN EVALUATION FORM

Student Name:	
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Internship Mentor Name:	
Organization/Company:	
Email:	
Signature/Date:	

Please evaluate the student on the following skills. These answers are confidential and will be used only to gauge the student learning outcomes for the undergraduate degree in Sustainability. If you are unable to assess the student's performance on any of the skills, leave that question blank. In the Comments box at the bottom, provide any additional relevant details on the student's performance. Please return the completed form to [matthew.ruther@louisville.edu](mailto:matthew.ruther@louisville.edu). Thank you!

Skill	Description	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Lowest ←→ Highest

<b>Work Quality</b>	<i>Is the student's work product accurate and complete, with attention to detail?</i>							
<b>Subject Knowledge</b>	<i>Does the student display adequate understanding of the subject matter?</i>							
<b>Time Use</b>	<i>Can the student prioritize their tasks? Does s/he work efficiently?</i>							
<b>Adaptability</b>	<i>Is the student able to adjust their focus or priorities when necessary?</i>							
<b>Initiative</b>	<i>Does the student demonstrate the ability to work independently?</i>							
<b>Judgment</b>	<i>Does the student exercise sound judgment?</i>							
<b>Problem Solving</b>	<i>Does the student demonstrate the ability to think critically and logically?</i>							
<b>Interpersonal Relations</b>	<i>Is the student able to work effectively with others or in groups?</i>							
<b>Verbal Communication</b>	<i>Are the student's verbal skills adequate for the organization's mission?</i>							
<b>Written Communication</b>	<i>Are the student's written skills adequate for the organization's mission?</i>							

<b>Comments</b>	
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