

Master of Urban Planning Program
Department of Urban and Public Affairs
University of Louisville

Internship/Practicum Handbook

Revised: March 2023

1. Introduction

The professional internship or practicum is an important component of the Master of Urban Planning (MUP) program at the University of Louisville. This learning experience offers the intern or practicum student the opportunity to integrate and test the skills and knowledge accumulated during the academic program of study.

The internship/practicum offers challenging professional work experience that will expose the student to the myriad demands that face planners, public servants, managers, and other allied professions. Above all, this exposure to a planning-oriented organization offers the student significant opportunity to apply the knowledge obtained through other course work in the MUP program.

PLAN606 (Internship and Professional Practice) is a required course of 3 credit hours. Normally, students undertake this course in the fall semester of their second year. It is anticipated that student will have completed an internship or practicum either prior to enrolling in the course or concurrently with it.

This handbook is designed to answer questions and assist you in early preparation for the internship/practicum component of your coursework. Please note the handbook covers the Internship/Practicum elements of this course. Students should refer to the course syllabus for additional information regarding the Professional Practice components of the course.

Please read the booklet thoroughly and direct any questions you may have to course instructor.

Internship or Practicum?

Pre-service students are those not currently employed in a planning-related position and/or without relevant work experience. They must elect the **internship** option.

In-service students are individuals who are currently employed in a planning-related position within a government, non-profit, or appropriate private agency. These students are eligible for the **practicum** option.

The internship is normally pursued by pre-service students and is a guided work experience designed to give students a realistic exposure to the planning arena. The internship includes work in an administrative or planning position in a government, non-profit, or appropriate private sponsoring organization. The internship is carried out under the direction of both an agency mentor and the course instructor. The MUP internship must include a **minimum of 200 hours** over a period of not less than one full academic semester.

The practicum is an extensive research paper/project pursued at the student's place of employment while under the supervision of the course instructor. The form and content of the project are not fixed, however the content must be relevant to the student's experience and workplace. The MUP practicum must include a **minimum of 200 hours** over a period of not less than one full academic semester.

2. Internship/Practicum Approval Process

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

1. **ONE FULL SEMESTER BEFORE** the anticipated start of the internship or practicum, the student should schedule a planning meeting with the MUP program director.
2. The program director will assist the student in identifying appropriate internship opportunities. It is the responsibility of the student to forward a resume and a cover letter to the sponsoring organization for review.
3. Once the sponsoring organization and subsequent internship/ practicum project has been identified, it is necessary that the student notify the program director and ask for approval of this project. The student should submit the **Memorandum of Understanding** form and obtain all necessary signatures. A copy of the form is included later in this handbook.

This process should be completed before enrollment in PLAN 606 and no later than the end of the first week of the semester during which the student is enrolled in PLAN 606.

3. Student Responsibilities

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

Similarly, the sponsoring agency should meet the same professional standards. If the student should have any concerns, they should be brought to the attention of the MUP advisor.

Checklist of Student Responsibilities

1. Obtain and review the *Internship/Practicum Handbook*.
2. Meet with MUP program director one semester prior to enrolling in PLAN 606.
3. Update resume and cover letter.
4. Apply to and obtain Internship position/finalize Practicum project with supervisor/sponsoring agency.
5. Complete the internship/practicum Memorandum of Understanding and obtain appropriate signatures and submit it to the program director.
6. Completion of 200 internship/practicum hours for MUP students.
7. Satisfactory performance as evaluated on the final evaluation report by the sponsoring agency

4. Sponsoring Organization Responsibilities

The sponsoring organization must be legally established and financially sound. A representative of the sponsoring organization must sign the internship/practicum agreement and must assign a member of its staff as an internship/practicum mentor. The mentor should:

1. Discuss the internship/practicum responsibilities and be available to answer questions and offer guidance to the intern.
2. When necessary, hold conferences with the student to discuss their progress in meeting the objectives of the internship/practicum.
3. Provide the student with a suitable work environment.
4. Complete the online evaluation report. The program director will send the link.

5. Program Director Responsibilities

The program director supervises the whole process of an internship/practicum, and should:

1. Inform students about the timeline of an internship or practicum.
2. Assist students to secure an intern or practicum.
3. Answer any related questions from students or sponsoring organizations.
4. Gather the final evaluation report from a sponsoring organization after an internship/practicum is completed.

***Department of Urban and Public Affairs
University of Louisville
MUP Internship/Practicum
Memorandum of Understanding***

The Department of Urban and Public Affairs, University of Louisville, _____,
Student
and _____ agree to the following:
Sponsoring Organization

1. The student is enrolled in the MUP program at the University of Louisville.
2. The student will perform the services requested in a fully professional manner.
3. Sponsoring organizations agree to provide a mentor and the Department of Urban and Public Affairs agrees to provide a faculty supervisor.
4. The internship/practicum mentor and the student will mutually strive to develop an effective working relationship, with the mentor providing an appropriate level of support and encouragement to the student.
5. The internship/practicum mentor will make every effort to insure that the student participates in as many facets as possible of the work within their area of responsibility.
6. A student who completes a *practicum*, which occurs at the student's regular place of work, will be required to engage in a work experience that is significantly different from their normal duties.
7. While every position requires some clerical tasks, these tasks should be incidental to the main duties of the internship/practicum.
8. When feasible, every attempt will be made to permit the student to observe or participate in various levels of decision-making in which the supervisor participates.
9. The internship/practicum mentor will complete a formal evaluation at the end of the internship/practicum and return it to the MUP Advisor.
10. The internship/practicum will commence on _____ and end on _____, and it will require _____ hours of work per week. The student's mentor, department, and general responsibilities are as follows:

Mentor Name _____

Mentor Title _____

Name of Sponsoring Agency _____

General Responsibilities

Stipend/Compensation (if provided by sponsor) _____

Additional Comments

Signatures:

Student

Internship Mentor

Program Director

***Department of Urban and Public Affairs - University of Louisville -
MUP Internship/Practicum Evaluation***

Name of Student Intern _____

- Rating scale:
- 1: Poor
 - 2: Below Average
 - 3: Average
 - 4: Good
 - 5: Superior

<u>Ability to Work with Agency/Community</u>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1. Understanding of agency purpose/function:	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Ability to understand and use agency policies and procedures:	—	—	—	—	—	—
3. Ability to plan, organize and use time effectively:	—	—	—	—	—	—
4. Knowledge and use of available resources:	—	—	—	—	—	—
5. Ability to obtain pertinent information/facts when needed:	—	—	—	—	—	—
6. Ability to distinguish relevant from irrelevant materials:	—	—	—	—	—	—
7. Ability to plan a course of action:	—	—	—	—	—	—
8. Written communication skills (memos, reports, briefs):	—	—	—	—	—	—
9. Presentation skills (meetings, proposals):	—	—	—	—	—	—
10. Ability to relate/apply theoretical knowledge to a given problem or agency function:	—	—	—	—	—	—
11. Ability to communicate with staff/others:	—	—	—	—	—	—

12. Ability to obtain relevant facts from materials:	—	—	—	—	—	—
<u>Professional development</u>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
13. Integration of theory and practice:	—	—	—	—	—	—
14. Shows pattern of continuous learning:	—	—	—	—	—	—
15. Ability to focus on problems/needs of agency:	—	—	—	—	—	—
16. Attitude towards authority:	—	—	—	—	—	—
17. Attitude toward assuming leadership role/additional responsibilities:	—	—	—	—	—	—
18. Promptness:	—	—	—	—	—	—
19. Dependability:	—	—	—	—	—	—

Additional comments:

Would you feel confident in hiring/recommending this student for a job?

Are the skills and theoretical knowledge gained by this student/employee in the MUP program beneficial to the needs of your agency/organization?

What suggestions, if any, do you have for the improvement of the MUP Program?

Additional comments:

Signature of Agency Mentor _____

Mentor's Name (printed) _____

Title _____

Name of Agency _____

Date _____