**Department of Emergency Management  
Internship FAQ**

* **Why is an internship required to graduate?**

The Department of Emergency Management believes that applied experiences enhance a student’s ability to synthesize concepts both within, and across, courses. A degree alone does not create the ideal candidate for an entry-level emergency management or business continuity position. Ideally, by the time students graduate, they have focused efforts on professional development activities that include: engagement with practitioner community events; training; and, applied experiences. The internship requirement is designed to ensure that students have the benefit of applied experiences in an organization, sector, or industry that interests them.

Internships supply students with an opportunity to: apply material learned in courses; experience emergency management practice; learn more about the structure, culture, and operational expectations within a sponsoring organization; contribute to the sponsoring organization’s mission; learn from colleagues, supervisors, mentors, and others present during the internship period; develop or enhance skills and abilities; and, show the sponsoring organization the strengths and capabilities brought to bear as a result of education and effort.

* **What qualifies as an acceptable emergency management or business continuity internship?**

To be approved, an internship must afford the intern the opportunity to work on meaningful emergency management and/or business continuity projects and become oriented to, build, and further develop skills and abilities essential to successful practice.

* **Does an internship need to be a paid internship to qualify?**

No, an internship does not need to be paid to meet the internship requirement. In fact, many internships are not paid. The Department of Emergency Management does not engage in discussions with sponsoring organizations regarding pay specifics. Details regarding pay are typically provided in advertisements or addressed in interviews.

* **What should I look for in an internship?**

Ideally, an internship gets students as close as possible to their beginning career goal. Students make internship choices based on any number of things, such as: the type of position; the sector the position is in; the geographic location of the position; or, the pay associated with the position.

* **What type of things should I ask a sponsoring organization to do to help me get the most out of my internship?**

The most successful internship experiences are those which are immersive and include a strong mentoring presence at the sponsoring organization. These organizations engage interns in activities that are part of the regular emergency management or business continuity function. This could include meetings, trainings, conferences, exercises, presentations to supervisors or commissioners, partner events, etc. If an event occurs during the internship period (which is not all that uncommon in this career path), interns should likewise engage in activities associated with the event.

Regarding mentoring, internship experiences create a powerful opportunity for interns to learn and grow under the guidance and tutelage of an established professional. Interns should ask to regularly receive feedback and guidance on ways in which they can improve and advance their efforts. Additionally, interns can seek guidance on, and support to attend, training, conferences, and other professional opportunities that are available during their internship.

* **Is there a special form or contract that I need to have the sponsoring organization fill-out?**

No, there is no form or contract required, but the Internship Coordinator must approve your internship. The goal is to allow as much flexibility as possible for students to find the best fit in an internship that meets their specific needs. The Internship Coordinator will reach out to the sponsoring organization to confirm the internship and will send an evaluation form for the sponsoring organization to complete at the end of the internship.

* **What if the sponsoring organization requires me to create a scope of work or sign another type of agreement about what I will do during my internship?**

In some instances, sponsoring organizations have their own processes and requirements for interns. These processes and requirements are typically not in conflict with the Department of Emergency Management’s operational framing. If in doubt, speak with the Internship Coordinator.

* **How many work hours (per internship credit) must I complete?**

For each hour of internship credit, you must complete a minimum of 50 hours of work with an approved sponsoring organization. Hence, three (3) credit internships require the completion of a minimum of 150 hours of work and six (6) credit internships require the completion of a minimum of 300 hours of work. Internships can only be completed within a three (3) or a six (6) credit frame.

* **How do I register for internship credits?**

The Internship Coordinator gives permission for students to register for internship credits after meeting with students, securing specifics about the internship, and approving the internship for credit. Once permission has been granted, the course can be added like any other course during registration. Internship credits are charged at the same tuition rate as course credits.

* **Who keeps track of the internship hours?**

Interns are responsible for tracking their own hours and completing the minimum required. Sponsoring organizations, while not required to track intern hours, typically track them as well and report any deficiencies.

* **What work do I have to do to pass my internship credits?**

All interns must complete a pre-internship sheet, submit regular reflection and progress sheets, complete a post-internship evaluation, and meet with the Internship Coordinator post-internship to discuss their evaluation and the sponsoring organization’s evaluation.

* **At what point in my studies should I start thinking about an internship?**

Students are expected to have completed at least three of the phase courses (EMGT 261-264), the professional development course (EMGT 291), and have considered their career path prior to setting up an internship. Ideally, the required internship credits should not be completed before a student is within 12 months of graduation and may be completed in the semester immediately after graduation (which results in degree posting the following semester). Internships can lead to job opportunities with a sponsoring organization; hence, to maximize these opportunities, proximity to graduation matters.

* **Which semester is the best time to do an internship?**

Internships can be done in any semester – fall, spring, or summer – but, most internships are completed the summer prior to, or after graduation. Internships completed during semesters where students have on-campus classes and many other obligations do not typically afford students enough time to devote to the internship (particularly given the operational hours of many sponsoring organizations). Summer semester internships allow students to more intently focus their time and energy on the internship and frees them to complete the internship at any geographic location (as opposed to one in proximity to the university).

* **How far in advance should I start searching for an internship?**

Internship opportunities vary and are specific to each student, but as a rule of thumb, students seeking to secure a competitive, paid internship should start the internship search process seven to nine months in advance. It is not uncommon to see internship positions listed early in the fall for the upcoming summer. The more specific a student’s interest, the earlier the search should begin. For example, if a student is interested in a specific organization or sector, it is prudent to monitor information about the organization or sector and the internship opportunities available. The Internship Coordinator will do direct outreach to organizations that have no established internship program or pathway to facilitate individual student’s career goals at the student’s request.

* **Can I do multiple internships?**

Yes, students can do multiple internships, but only six credits of internship are required. The Internship Coordinator will help provide advice on, and help arrange, both credit and non-credit internships for students. Non-credit internships arranged with the department’s help do not carry the same deliverable requirements as credit internships, but they do carry the same professional expectations. Multiple internships allow students to both flesh out their resume and form more concrete ideas about the pathway and positions they are interested in. Volunteer opportunities are another way to acquire applied experience. These opportunities typically require less time (sometimes only hours) and allow students to participate in a variety of experiences.

* **Where can I get help with my resume, cover letter, and interview skills?**

These topics are covered in the department’s professional development course (EMGT 291). Prior to applying for internships or jobs, students and alumni should utilize the free services available through the NDSU Career Center (<https://career.ndsu.edu/>). Through the Career Center students can receive free resume and cover letter review, do mock interviews, and address other career needs and questions. These services are available throughout a student’s time on the campus and for six years after graduation.

* **I still have questions, who can answer them for me?**

The Internship Coordinator is available to all emergency management majors and is happy to meet with students to answer questions (at any juncture in their studies). If a student identifies a specific career pathway early in their studies, they should tell their major advisor to allow their advisor to make more focused course recommendations for that pathway. Department faculty engage often with students and all faculty members are willing to answer students’ questions about pathways in which they have expertise.