Anschutz

Graduate School

Graduate School Policy for Academic Internships

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) defines an internship as "a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional workplace setting" [1]. This policy applies only to academic internships that meet this definition and are offered through CU Anschutz Graduate School-affiliated programs. It does not apply to other forms of experiential learning, including co-ops, apprenticeships, externships, practicum, clinical or field placements, job shadowing, on- or off-campus original research projects, or on-campus work-study positions.

I. Purpose and Applicability

1) Academic internships provide structured opportunities for students to apply academic knowledge in professional settings, develop career-relevant skills, and build partnerships with metropolitan, regional, and national employers. Standard expectations are necessary to ensure that internship experiences provide educational value, support student career preparation, and meet Graduate School requirements.

2) This policy applies only to academic internships offered as part of a CU Anschutz Graduate School-affiliated program. It does not apply to professional programs. Students in professional programs should consult their school-specific policies and guidance.

II. Exclusions

1) Practicum, practical training, and professional licensure programs are excluded from this policy.
2) Other experiential learning activities are excluded, including but not limited to co-ops, apprenticeships, externships, job shadowing, on- or off-campus original research projects, and on-campus work-study positions.

III. Definitions

1) *Academic Internship* – A curriculum-based practical work experience in a field of study that enhances student learning. Academic internships are supported by an experience provider and a discipline-specific faculty sponsor or course instructor who facilitates the academic components of the internship and monitors student progress. Enrolled students may participate in academic internships that are for-credit paid, for-credit unpaid, or not-for-credit paid. Unpaid, not-for-credit academic internships are not permitted.

2) *Internship Participants* – Academic internships are three-way collaborations among the student intern, experience provider, and university sponsor.

   a) *Student Intern* – A graduate degree-seeking student, or certificate-seeking student in limited circumstances, in good standing and currently enrolled at CU Anschutz. Student interns must follow all campus and program internship requirements, conduct themselves in accordance with CU Anschutz ethical standards, meet obligations at the internship site, and complete the academic requirements specified in the internship learning agreement.

   b) *Experience Provider* – A business or organization approved by the Graduate School to provide work experience related to the student's field of study. The experience provider must identify a qualified professional within their organization to serve as the internship site supervisor. The site supervisor will meet regularly with the student, monitor work assignments, mentor the intern, provide opportunities to accomplish identified learning goals, and complete a performance evaluation at the conclusion of the internship.

   c) *University Sponsor* – A CU Anschutz faculty member or employee who approves the internship learning goals. PhD students must receive approval from both their dissertation advisor and PhD program director. Students enrolled in an internship course must receive approval from the internship course director.

3) *Internship Learning Agreement* – A Graduate School-approved document that defines the responsibilities of all internship participants and documents the intern's work duties, learning goals, academic assignments, remuneration and/or academic credits (if applicable). The agreement must include contact information for each party and identify responsibility for liability and workers' compensation insurance.

IV. Policy Requirements

A. Internship Requirements

1) Each academic internship requires a learning agreement signed by the student, site supervisor, academic sponsor, and Graduate School before the internship begins.
2) To be eligible, an academic internship must:
   a) be directly related to the student's field of study and/or professional goals;
   b) provide for integration of academic and experiential learning;
   c) be deemed academically appropriate by the individual program and submitted to the Graduate School for final approval;
   d) include appropriate written agreements between the student, site supervisor,

and academic sponsor that clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of each party to ensure the integrity of the internship experience and address legal and liability issues;

e) require an evaluation by the site supervisor and student at the end of the internship.

B. Student Eligibility

1) Students must meet the following minimum requirements to participate in an academic internship:
   a) Currently enrolled in a CU Anschutz Graduate School affiliated degree-granting or certificate program.
   b) Currently in good academic standing at CU Anschutz.

2) The Graduate School may establish additional eligibility requirements. Eligibility determinations are made case by case, and academic or professional conduct violations may result in loss of eligibility.

C. Experience Provider Eligibility

1) Experience providers must meet the following requirements:
   a) The organization must be approved by the individual program and be a legitimate business entity, non-profit, or government agency. The Graduate School shall have the ultimate authority in approving the organization.
      i) Any home-based businesses granted an exception to this requirement must be evaluated for safety and liability in consultation with University Risk Management, and approved by the academic sponsor and Graduate School;
   b) The experience provider agrees to provide necessary orientation, training, and precautionary safety instructions for the student intern;
   c) The experience provider agrees to provide work assignments directly related to a student's CU Anschutz field of study that provide opportunities to accomplish the learning goals outlined in the internship learning agreement;
   d) The student is directly supervised by a practicing professional in the field who agrees to provide the student ongoing supervision, performance reviews, and a final evaluation at the end of the internship;
   e) The experience provider agrees to provide the minimum number of work hours required for the student to receive academic credit (if applicable);
   f) The experience provider agrees to provide timely notification to the academic sponsor if any problems arise during the course of the internship;
   g) The experience provider may not require the student to pay the employer in any form for any part of the experience;
   h) The experience provider must ensure that the student has access to an

appropriate workspace and tools with which to perform their duties. Students participating in virtual internships are responsible for maintaining a safe and appropriate space for work.

i) The experience provider will disclose to the University any agreements requested that are in addition to the learning agreement, such as confidentiality agreements, etc. The University prohibits internships that require "hold harmless" agreements that require indemnification;
j) The student may not be considered a "consultant" or be expected to provide a function the employer's professional staff does not have skills to perform. Interns may not be hired as "independent contractors."

D. Academic Sponsor Eligibility and Criteria

1) All academic sponsors must meet the following criteria:
   a) must be a CU Anschutz faculty member, a dually-appointed CU Denver faculty member, or an internship course director;
   b) may not serve as both the academic sponsor and experience provider for the internship; and
   c) for internships that are for-credit only: must be the faculty of record providing direct academic oversight and may not reassign academic oversight to another (including adjunct, lecturer, postdoctoral fellow, etc.);

E. Academic Credit Requirements

1) Students receiving academic credit must register for an internship course, which may be a program-specific internship course number or the general Graduate School internship course number, BSBT 6939.
2) The academic sponsor determines the total number of internship credits allowed within the limits of the degree program and how those credits apply to the degree plan, such as elective credit or a graduation requirement. Final approval shall be provided by the Graduate School.
3) Students may earn one to six credit hours for each internship experience, as determined by program requirements. If the internship experience spans multiple semesters, each semester must include clearly defined and distinct learning goals.
4) Student interns should complete a minimum of 45 internship hours per academic credit.
5) The number of credit hours earned for an internship must be agreed upon by the student and academic sponsor and documented in the internship learning agreement.
6) Internship credit may not be granted retroactively for previous internship experiences.
7) The internship drop period follows regular University drop policies. Students must

notify the academic sponsor and experience provider before dropping an internship.

8) Students supported by external fellowships must comply with rules for allowable time above and beyond full-time effort on those awards.

F. Out-of-State Internships

1) Out-of-state internships are bound by the same policies and guidelines as in-state internships.

G. International Internships

1) International internships must comply with all international travel requirements in Campus Administrative Policy 7015. Students are strongly encouraged to consult International Student and Scholar Services before pursuing an international internship.

H. Internship Learning Agreement

1) An internship learning agreement is required for all internship placements and must be signed by each partner before the internship commences. Required components are described in Section III, Definition 3: Internship Learning Agreement.

I. Course Registration Status

1) Academic internships will generally be classified as State-funded instruction.

References

1. National Association of Colleges and Employers internship definitions: https://www.naceweb.org/internships.

Version history:

This policy was approved by the Graduate Faculty Council in October 2026.