

Master's Degree Program in Technical and Scientific Communication (MTSC)

Regulations Governing Internships

For Employers of MTSC Interns

Department of English
Miami University
Oxford, OH 45056

Revised November, 2004

Revised: November, 2004

Introduction

Miami University's Master's Degree Program in Technical and Scientific Communication (MTSC) is a practice-oriented, professional program that prepares students for careers as technical and scientific communicators. The program takes a problem-solving approach, teaching strategies that are applicable to communication problems in a variety of media, including print and computer-generated communications.

The MTSC internship, an integral part of this program, is intended to provide students with supervised, first-hand experience at applying what they have learned in their classes to the kinds of professional situations they will encounter in their careers. Internships are also designed to help students gain or extend their direct, personal knowledge of the profession and its practices.

A student fulfills the internship requirement by completing two activities: (1) working as an apprentice technical and scientific communicator, and (2) preparing a formal report on this work. For both of these activities, the student works under the direction of an Internship Supervisory Committee consisting of three faculty members (sometimes four), who are selected by the student. The student must also be supervised by an experienced writer who will mentor the student in writing/editing. This person must have at least five years of experience as a technical communicator. This same person may assign the student work—or the organization may ask someone other than the writing mentor to designate the tasks the student will perform.

Students may perform the internship as soon as they complete six of the eight required courses in the MTSC program. These six courses must include Introduction to Technical and Scientific Communication and Technical and Scientific Writing.

Internship Placement

The essential feature of an internship is that the student works full-time for fourteen consecutive weeks (or its equivalent) in a professional capacity with the guidance of a person knowledgeable about technical and scientific communication. A student may arrange the internship with a business, government, or non-profit organization anywhere in the world.

In the internship, the student should perform professional duties similar to those that he or she hopes to perform after graduation. Thus, the student might work for your organization as a writer or editor, or even as a manager, if the student has had previous experience as a professional communicator and if he or she can work under the guidance of an appropriate mentor.

Previous MTSC Internship employers have included:

- American Paper Institute (Washington, DC)
- AT&T Global Information Solutions (Georgia)
- Bayer Corporation (Pennsylvania)
- Bluespring Software (Ohio)
- Cleveland Clinic (Ohio)
- Cold Spring Harbor Research Laboratory (New York)
- Confederation Life Insurance Company (Georgia)
- CTC Parker (Ohio)
- Dell Computers (Texas)
- Eli Lilly and Company (Indiana)
- Fahlgren & Swink Advertising Agency (West Virginia)
- Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Illinois)
- General Electric Aircraft Engine Plant (Ohio)
- Lenscrafters (Ohio)
- Los Alamos National Laboratories (New Mexico)
- Mead Data Central (Ohio)
- Microsoft (Washington)
- National Cancer Institute (Washington, DC)
- National Medical Computer Systems (California)
- NCR Corporation
- North Carolina Alternative Energy Corporation (North Carolina)
- Procter & Gamble (Ohio)
- U. S. Environmental Protection Agency Research Laboratory (North Carolina)
- Whittman–Hart (Ohio)

If you do not normally hire interns but only permanent employees, a student may perform an internship as a fourteen-week segment of a permanent position with your firm. Moreover, a student who works as a practicing technical or scientific communicator while studying in the MTSC program may perform the internship with his or her current employer.

Internships Involving Classified, Confidential, Or Proprietary Information

Students may perform internships in situations where they will be working with classified, confidential, or proprietary information. In these situations, agreements must be worked out in advance between your organization and the University supervisory committee concerning the contents of the student's internship report. The University recognizes the need for some organizations to protect information and believes that mutually satisfactory arrangements can be worked out in most cases. However, students must be able to share samples of their work with their supervisory committees, and they must have completed some significant work during the internship that they can discuss in detail and display in their internship reports.

Internship Proposal Contract

Before beginning work in your organization, the student must obtain permission for the internship from his or her supervisory committee and the MTSC Program Director. The student must also collaborate with someone in your organization to fill out the attached proposal contract. The student must submit the form during the first week of the internship and must discuss the internship with his or her chair and the Director before the internship can begin.

The attached contract describes the following things:

1. The name and address of the sponsoring organization.
2. The name of the student's supervisor (and if different, the intern's writing mentor) and the contact information for the mentor(s).
3. A brief description of the mentor's experience with the field of technical communication and an attached resume.
4. A brief description of the nature of the sponsoring organization's work.
5. A description of the various projects the student is likely to be assigned during his or her internship.
6. The dates of the internship.

The Internship contract requires the student's mentor to agree to the following assurances:

1. The sponsoring organization will pay the student.
2. The writing mentor and student will meet weekly to discuss the student's progress.
3. The sponsoring organization will allow the student to share samples of his or her internship work with the supervisory committee and to publish representative samples of that work in the internship report.
4. The sponsoring organization will provide the intern with an appropriate orientation to the organization.
5. The sponsoring organization will evaluate the student at five weeks by initiating a conversation between the student's mentor and internship committee Chair.
6. The sponsoring organization will evaluate the student in writing at the end of his or her internship and share this written evaluation with the student's internship committee.

The Internship contract also requires the following assurances from the student:

1. That the work assigned for the internship period is consistent with his or her supplementary courses in the Plan of Study and with his or her professional goals.
2. That he or she will perform the work specified in the Internship Form.
3. That he or she will write two progress reports during the fifth and tenth weeks of the internship. These should describe the progress of the internship. They may be submitted by regular post or email.

When the student's committee chair has reviewed and approved the Internship Proposal Contract and has gained approval from the other internship committee members and the Director, the committee chair will inform the student and the internship supervisor, and the student may continue work.

Internship Report

At the end of the internship, the student must write a formal report on his or her internship experience. The purpose of this report is for the student to present a detailed, case study of the internship experience. The student does not have to complete an entire project in order to write about it, but the major activity or project described in the report should have been a significant activity in the intern's entire work experience. In the final chapter of the report, the student is asked to focus on the use of problem-solving approaches to technical communication. The report also serves to inform faculty and

Revised: November, 2004

students in the program about the practice of technical communication in your organization and to help students who have not yet performed their internships to understand what they can expect.

Additional Guidelines for Telecommuting Internships

Telecommuting, which may be approved for internships under certain conditions, offers employers and employees both unique benefits and special challenges. Our goal with the following requirements is to ensure that interns who telecommute have a good chance of feeling supported in their internships and integrated into the organizations where they will work. If the intern's academic committee does not believe that such an internship adequately meets the requirements described below, the committee may reject the internship.

Telecommuting internships will be considered only when the sponsoring organization has had prior successful telecommuting relationships with other employees or contractors. Additionally, the intern's direct supervisor must have prior experience successfully managing telecommuters.

Guidelines for employers

1. Members of the sponsoring organization will meet with the student and describe the following:
 - ◆ The organization's goals for and prior experience with telecommuters.
 - ◆ The supervisor's goals for and prior experience with telecommuters.
 - ◆ Any special policies responding to the unique requirements of telecommuting, such as reimbursement for expenses, tools (hardware and software), technical support, and travel.
 - ◆ Expectations for frequency and type of interactions with supervisors and project team members during the internship period.
2. The sponsoring organization will agree to the following requirements:
 - a. The sponsoring organization will explain how the intern's work will contribute to the communication goals of the organization. The sponsoring organization will describe the specific tasks that the intern will perform during the internship.
 - b. The sponsoring organization will provide the intern with an on-site orientation to the organization including meetings with the subject matter experts, and when appropriate, the user.

- c. The sponsoring organization will introduce the intern to the people with whom he or she will be working and must assure that they will maintain regular communication with the intern. Regular contact may be by a variety of channels, including telephone, e-mail, or in-person meetings. [It will be important for the sponsoring organization to provide an email account for the intern so that the intern's address will appear in the email accounts of those involved at the sponsoring organization. This strategy will ensure that the intern receives any general team updates by individuals working on the project.]
- d. The sponsoring organization will include the intern in all project meetings. This inclusion can be in person when the intern visits the employer's site or by phone when the intern is at the remote site.
- e. If necessary for the intern's project, the intern should be provided with network access. The purpose of this guideline is to allow the intern access to the client's computer, to share files with other team members and to save work-in-progress to the remote site.
- f. For students who are documenting software applications, the client will provide access to the most current version of the software. [This access will allow just-in-time documentation, screen captures, and self-testing.]
- g. The supervisor must have in-person meetings with the intern during the fifth, tenth, and final weeks of the internship.
- h. If the writing mentor and organizational supervisor are not the same person, the writing mentor will be in contact with the student weekly; this contact may be by a variety of channels, including telephone, e-mail, or in-person meetings. The writing mentor must have in-person meetings with the intern during the fifth, tenth, and final weeks of the internship.

In addition, the sponsoring organization should assist the intern in carrying out the guidelines for students listed below.

1. Students will follow all of the regulations for on-site internships and will insure that the sponsoring organization is willing to adhere to the guidelines for employers reprinted below.

2. The intern should reflect the additional information provided in *Guidelines for Employers* (regarding telecommuting internships) in the proposal signed by the internship sponsor and a writing mentor. The work that the intern is asked to perform must clearly support the communication goals learned about in the interview.
3. The intern will prepare a progress report in the second week of the internship that will address the specific conditions of the telecommuting internship and any other special concerns the intern has. This report will be in addition to those normally required in the fifth and tenth weeks of the internship.
4. The intern will maintain regular contact with the sponsoring organization and with the chair of the internship committee. Regular contact may include weekly phone conversations with both supervisors to ensure the intern is comfortable with the work and the working environment and is also confident about seeking advice from the sponsoring organization. Copies of status reports, if required by the sponsoring organization, should be sent to the Committee Chair.

For More Information

Please address your questions about the internship to Dr. Jean Lutz, Director, Master's Degree Program in Technical and Scientific Communication, Department of English, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056, 513-529-5221, lutzja@muohio.edu

Master Of Technical And Scientific Communication Program [MTSC]
English Department, Miami University
Phone: (513) 529-5221; Fax: (513) 529-1392; E-mail: MTSC@muohio.edu

Internship Proposal Contract for Sponsors, Interns, and Internship Committees

To help sponsoring organizations and interns benefit as much as possible from the internship experience, we are asking that a representative of the sponsoring organization (usually the intern's writing mentor or project manager) and the intern fill out this form at the time the sponsoring organization offers an internship or full-time job and the intern accepts it. The intern should send a copy of the signed document to his or her committee chair.

I. The Sponsoring Organization

Name of the sponsoring organization:

Address and telephone number of sponsoring organization:

II. Mentoring for the Intern

Name, title, and contact information for intern's work supervisor:

Name, title, and contact information for intern's **writing mentor**, if different:

Revised: November, 2004

Writing mentor's experience with technical communication (attach resume):

III. The Sponsoring Organization's Work and the Intern's Responsibilities

Nature of the sponsoring organization's work:

Description of several projects that will be assigned to the intern during the fourteen weeks of the internship. (Internships may be longer, or may be adjusted to meet special circumstances.)

The dates of the internship (please date from the time the intern expects to have the internship approved):

Date of first review (five weeks from the beginning of the internship):

Date of final review (at the end of the internship):

IV. Assurances from the Sponsoring Organization (SO)

Signature (below) of the internship mentor indicates agreement on the following six issues:

- The sponsoring organization (SO) will pay the intern.
- The SO's mentor will meet weekly to discuss the progress of the intern's work.
- The SO will allow the intern to share samples of his/her work with the committee and to publish samples in the internship report, a document available to the public through the Miami University Library.
- The SO will provide the intern with an appropriate orientation to the organization.
- The SO will evaluate the intern at five weeks by initiating a conversation between the mentor and the Chair of the internship committee.
- The SO will evaluate the intern in writing at the end of the internship and share this evaluation with the intern's committee.

(Please type or print name)
For the sponsoring organization

(Please sign)

Date: _____

V. Assurances from Intern

Signature (below) of the intern indicates agreement on the three following issues:

- That the work assigned for the internship period is consistent with his/her supplementary courses in the Plan of Study and with his/her professional goals.
- That he/she will perform the work specified in Item III.
- That he/she will write two progress reports (these can be transmitted by email) to be submitted during the fifth and tenth weeks describing the progress of the internship.

(Please type or print name)
Intern

(Please sign)

Date: _____

VI. The Internship Committee

After requesting a MTSC faculty member to chair your committee, you should discuss your internship with this person, select and request willingness to serve from your other committee members, and submit this proposal contract to your committee chair. The chair of your committee will circulate copies of the proposal contract, along with an approval form, to your other committee members. The Chair will also send a copy of the proposal contract to the Director of the MTSC program so it can be put in your permanent file. Your internship chair should also let you and your internship supervisor know when the internship has been officially approved.

Intern, please indicate names of committee members in the spaces below.

Chair, Internship Committee

Other committee members:

Reader

Reader

Committee chair: Please distribute a copy of the proposal contract to committee members and send a copy to the Director of MTSC for the student's file. Please also get in touch with the intern and the internship's supervisor to confirm approval of the internship.