

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

## Regulations Governing Internships

FOR MTSC STUDENTS

Department of English  
Miami University  
Oxford, OH 45056

Revised November 2004

## **INTRODUCTION**

An integral part of the MTSC program, the internship will provide you with supervised, first-hand experience at applying what you've learned in your classes to the kinds of professional situations you'll encounter in your career. It also will help you to extend your knowledge of the profession and its practices. As part of your formal education, the internship is designed to provide you with an even richer learning experience than you would normally obtain during your first months in a new job.

Overall, you can fulfill the internship requirement by completing two activities:

- working as an apprentice technical and scientific communicator, and
- preparing a formal report on this work.

In these activities, you will work under the direction of a supervisory committee consisting of three faculty members (sometimes four), whom you will select.

You may perform the internship as soon as you complete six of the eight required courses in the program; these six courses must include English 692 (Introduction to Technical and Scientific Communication) and English 694 (Technical and Scientific Writing).

## **INTERNSHIP PLACEMENT**

The essential feature of an internship is that you work full-time for fourteen weeks in a professional capacity with the guidance of a person knowledgeable about technical and scientific communication. Under certain special circumstances, you may consult with the Director to determine if you may fulfill your internship requirement by completing a specified number of hours as opposed to weeks. You may arrange your internship with a business, government, or non-profit organization anywhere in the world.

In your internship, you should perform duties similar to those you hope to perform after graduation. Thus, you might work as a writer or editor, or even as a manager if you've had previous experience as a professional communicator and if you can work under the guidance of an appropriate mentor.

Also, you should perform the internship in the kind of organization you hope to work for after graduation--for example, a computer documentation department, a proposal writing group in a research laboratory, or the editorial department of a scientific journal. Your internship **MUST** conform to the knowledge area you have declared on your MTSC Plan of Study and to the supplementary courses that have taken at Miami or that you have brought with you from another school. Under special circumstances, work experience may also count as supplementary course work in your MTSC Plan of Study. Should you decide to accept an internship in an organization that does business other than that that corresponds to your MTSC supplementary course requirement, you will need to complete suitable supplementary coursework in that area to fulfill your internship requirement.

Some organizations may have no provision for hiring "interns" and may, instead, wish to hire you as a permanent employee. In this case, your internship may be a fourteen-week segment of your permanent job. Also, if you are working as a practicing technical or scientific communicator while studying in the MTSC program, you may perform your internship with your current employer.

## **FINDING AN INTERNSHIP**

The responsibility for finding an internship is yours, although you are encouraged to consult the program's faculty for guidance. You should begin your internship search at least four months before you wish to perform the internship.

If, after a conscientious search, you are unable to find a satisfactory internship on your own, you may ask for assistance from the MTSC Executive Committee. However, you are more likely than the Executive Committee to find an internship that involves exactly the kind of work you want to do after graduation. Further, it may take the committee longer to find an internship than it would take you if you continue your own search.

## **INTERNSHIPS INVOLVING CLASSIFIED, CONFIDENTIAL, OR PROPRIETARY INFORMATION**

You may perform your internship in a situation where you will be working with classified, confidential, or proprietary information. In such a situation, an agreement must be worked out in advance between the sponsoring organization and the chair of your supervisory committee concerning the contents of your internship report. The university recognizes the need of some organizations to protect information and believes that mutually satisfactory arrangements can be worked out in most cases. *However, you must be able to share samples of your work with your supervisory committee, and you must have completed some significant work during the internship that you can discuss in detail and display in your internship report.*

## **SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE**

The committee that supervises your internship on behalf of the university is composed of three members, occasionally four, who are selected by you with the approval of the MTSC Director. You must choose two of these members from among the faculty in the English Department who specialize in technical and scientific communication; you should ask one of these members to serve as chair. You may choose the other member(s) of the committee from among the other faculty who teach in your technical or scientific specialty or from whom you have had a course.

You should choose your supervisory committee as soon as your internship prospects seem reasonably firm. You may consult the program Director for advice about the composition of your committee.

Faculty in the English Department who specialize in technical communication will chair and serve on an equal number of internship committees for each MTSC class. Exceptions may be made if the faculty member involved, the MTSC Executive Committee, and the Chair of the English Department all agree.

## **INTERNSHIP PROPOSAL CONTRACT**

Before you begin work for your sponsoring organization, you must obtain permission for the internship from your supervisory committee. You may begin this process by getting an oral approval for your internship from your committee chair. You must follow this oral agreement with a written contract (see attachment) completed by your mentor at your sponsoring organization and by you. This written contract should be submitted to your committee chair before you begin--or during the first week--of your internship.

The internship contract has two parts. The first requests information and a number of assurances from the sponsoring organization:

1. *The organization itself--its mission, products, services, etc.*
2. *The dates of your internship*
3. *Your position within the organization.*
4. *The kind of work you will do.* You must be assigned to perform professional work appropriate for someone who has completed at least one year of graduate study in technical and scientific communication.
5. *The qualifications of the person (or people) who will supervise and mentor your writing and you as an intern.* You must work with the guidance of a supervisor within the organization in which you are employed. That person will be responsible for assigning and overseeing the work that you will perform and will evaluate you at five weeks and at the end of the internship. You must also work with a writing mentor, someone able to teach, advise and evaluate you as a communicator. Your mentor may be your supervisor in the organization but if no one in the organization can serve as a writing mentor, your mentor can be someone else--even someone outside the organization. Whoever you seek as your writing mentor, this person must be an accomplished (at least five years' experience) professional communicator or someone with other expertise who can contribute to your professional development as a communication specialist. The qualifications of the mentor should be detailed in an attached resume.
6. *The organization will provide you with an appropriate orientation to its policies and procedures.* You must receive an orientation to the organization's systems and practices for handling its technical and scientific communications.
7. *Assurances that you will receive evaluations of your work by the organization.* You must be evaluated according to appropriate professional standards. Your employer must share this evaluation with your supervisory committee. Your committee will require at least two evaluations: an oral one (via telephone) after the fifth week of the internship and a written evaluation at the end of the internship. You should arrange both of these evaluations.

The assurances from the sponsoring organization must also include the following:

1. *You will be paid.*
2. *The sponsoring organization will share its evaluations of you with your supervisory committee and will cooperate with your committee's efforts to monitor the progress of the internship.* During the internship, committee members may ask questions of the sponsoring organization or visit it.
3. *You will be permitted to share samples of your internship work with your committee and to publish representative samples of your work in your internship report.*

The second part of the proposal contract includes the assurances you provide to your committee by signing the appropriate place in the contract. You agree that you will perform

the work required of you to the best of your ability; that your work is in line with your MTSC Plan of Study, supplementary course work, and declared knowledge area; and that you will submit two progress reports during the fifth and tenth weeks of the internship.

If the chair of your supervisory committee approves the proposal contract, he or she will circulate it to the other members of the committee, who will be asked whether they approve it also. The committee does not need to meet formally to approve the proposal. However, all approvals must be in writing.

When all the committee members have reviewed and approved the internship proposal, the chair of your committee will convey the results to the Director of the MTSC program, to you, and to your internship supervisor.

You may petition the MTSC Executive Committee for approval of an internship that doesn't have all the features described in this section. When reviewing these petitions, the committee will assess, among other things, whether the internship you propose is consistent with the goals of the MTSC program and with your own educational and career objectives.

### **INTERNSHIP JOURNALS AND SAMPLES**

During your internship, you are advised to keep a weekly journal, in which you record your internship activities, the approximate amounts of time you've worked on various projects, questions that have occurred to you about the profession of technical communication, and things that you have learned about the profession during your internship. This information will be especially helpful to you in writing your internship report. In some cases, your supervisory committee may ask to see your journal in order to learn more about your internship.

In addition to keeping a journal, you should save samples of the work you do during your internship. Your committee may wish to see samples of this work as the internship progresses, and you must display samples of your projects in your internship report. You may also wish to display drafts of a project on which you worked in order to show how the project developed.

### **PROGRESS REPORTS AND EVALUATIONS**

As specified above, in order to keep your committee informed of the progress of your internship, you should contact your committee chair and submit progress reports near the end of the fifth and tenth weeks of your internship to discuss your activities. You may submit your reports by regular post or by e-mail. However, you should call or write your committee chair any time you feel that there are problems with your internship or whenever you have questions for your committee. You should also arrange for your internship writing mentor to call your committee chair after the fifth week of your internship.

At the end of your internship, your supervisor or someone else in the sponsoring organization must write an evaluation of your performance in the internship. This evaluation should be shared with you and with your supervisory committee. However, if your employer wishes to conduct other evaluations of your work and to share these with the committee, these evaluations will be welcome.

## **INTERNSHIP REPORT**

Your overall **purpose** in the internship report is to present a detailed, analytic case study of the context and activities of your internship. More specifically, you will be writing to inform students and faculty in the program about the practice of technical and scientific communication where you worked and to help students who have not yet performed their internships to understand what they might expect. You will also have an opportunity for reflection and analysis in the report; see Chapter 4, below. A very important purpose of this report will be to demonstrate your proficiency as a writer. You should do your best to turn in a first draft that is worthy of a graduate from a writing program. To assist you in this process, you should make every effort to do the following:

1. Follow the *Guide for Preparing Theses and Dissertations* prepared by the Miami University Graduate School (9-4125) and detailed in “A Handbook for Graduate Students and Faculty, 20xx-20xx.” This document changes every year, so you should not rely on someone else’s old copy. You can also find the document online at [www.muohio.edu/graduateschool](http://www.muohio.edu/graduateschool). This document addresses the format of your report (and the Graduate School measures margins and checks pages to make sure you have complied) and the procedures for submitting it to the graduate school. You should review these procedures early, for they are time consuming and require advance planning.
2. Follow the guidelines you have been taught for preparing professional reports. You should use parallel chapter titles, headings, and subheadings. You should use forecasting statements, topic sentences, and specific details to develop your topic sentences. You should imagine explaining your internship to someone who knows nothing about it—and therefore, you should imagine where you might use graphics or lists, where you need to supply details or examples. You should never just write something so that your internship chair can “fix” it. You should focus on the style of your report, making sure that you eliminate passives where appropriate, reduce nominalizations to make your text more readable—and use vocabulary as precisely as you can.

This does not mean that you must—or will—have a perfect first draft. It is most difficult to write effectively about something you know well. You and your internship chair will cooperate to make sure that your report is as effective as possible before your report is circulated to other committee members. Depending on the quality of your first draft, you may need to allow enough time for two or three reviews with your internship chair.

As you write, you can imagine that you have three major **audiences** for the report:

- Students who enroll in the MTSC program and are interested in the context in which you worked or in your specific experiences.
- Faculty who must evaluate your internship experience and your ability to write effectively about this experience.
- Co-workers at your sponsoring organization who are interested in what you have to say about them, the organization, the organization’s customers, and so forth.

You also have a very nebulous fourth audience, the public readers of the document who may access it from our Miami University Library.

The **length and content** of the report varies somewhat from person to person. However, we prefer that the reports be about 25 pages, not counting appendices. Remember that it is a valuable skill to be able to write succinctly. Typically, the report has the four sections

described below. [You may work out a different organization with your internship committee if you desire.]

Chapter 1, an introduction. A description of the following:

- Where and when you performed your internship
- Your title and position
- The organization with which you worked and its organizational culture and structure
- The nature of the work you were hired to perform
- How this work contributed to the overall work of the organization
- A forecast of the report's remaining contents

Chapter 2, an overview of your internship.

This chapter should be a summary of the major activities you performed during your internship. It may be organized by projects, by tasks, or any way that makes sense to you. At the end of the chapter, however, readers should be able to discern what you did and how much time you spent on each project or activity.

Chapter 3, a detailed description of a major activity.

NOTE: You do NOT have to have started or completed this activity during the internship period. The activity does, however, have to have occupied a significant portion of your time (not necessarily the most time consuming task in your internship), and it does have to have contributed to your development as a technical or scientific communicator.

The key to writing this chapter successfully is to provide enough detail so that readers can easily follow not only what you did but also how you did it. For example, if you say that you conducted an audience analysis, you might add how you did it: through interviews of key personnel in your organization and through interviews with potential audience members over the phone. And you should probably develop the topic further by describing your procedures for carrying out these activities. You might add appendices of your interviewing instruments and a synopsis of your findings.

Chapter 4, an analysis of your process for completing this project or others during your internship.

Many students choose Paul Anderson's Problem-Solving Model for Technical Communication to discuss in this chapter. They may discuss how their process did or did not conform to this particular process for developing a communication. But you are free to discuss whatever process you used for developing the communications you describe in your report—though you might ultimately want to compare these to the Anderson heuristic. Recall, though, that good processes are meant to be heuristic and not algorithmic, and the Anderson model, in particular, is not contextualized. So your discussion might focus on how you developed a contextualized process in your environment. In any case, this chapter is a place for you to reflect on how you structured the activities you performed to complete your work. You may also work out another topic that involves critical thinking, reflection, and analysis with your committee chair.

Besides the items mentioned above, your report should include samples of your major project in an appendix, along with other representative work you completed during your internship.

## **PROCEDURE**

Usually, you will begin work on your internship report by discussing a plan—an outline and a time line—with the chair of your internship committee. You should have this discussion early in the semester—perhaps even in the semester BEFORE you want to graduate. As you develop your schedule, you should keep in mind that your chair and other internship committee members need at least two weekends to review your report. Remember, too, that you cannot count on the end of the semester as your goal. Internship reports must be deposited one week BEFORE the end of classes to be considered on time for the fall, spring, or summer graduation.

One thing you should know: faculty are not required to be available to work on internship reports during the summer. So depending on the summer schedule of your chair, he or she may or may not be willing to review drafts during this time. However, you CAN work during the summer if you want to, and a good plan is to have a really good draft ready for your internship chair at the end of August when classes are just reconvening.

Once you and your chair have agreed on your outline and schedule, you should prepare your first draft. Recall that you may have to go through several drafts to meet the academic standards of the program. However, when you and your chair believe that your report is ready to be reviewed by the entire committee, he or she will distribute copies that you provide to the rest of the committee for review. The committee will meet to discuss your report, and one of several things may happen:

- Your report passes, and you do not have to make changes
- Your report passes, and you have to make minor changes overseen by your chair
- Your report passes, but you have major changes to make. The entire committee may ask to review your report again.
- Your report does not pass—and you will be asked to rewrite the report.

Once your committee has approved your report, your committee chair will circulate a Certificate of Completion of Degree to your committee members and to the Chair of the English Department. Once these people have signed, a copy of the Certificate will be sent to the Graduate School to verify that you have completed your degree requirements.

During the time that your committee is reading, evaluating, and completing the paper for the graduate school, you should be busily following the procedures (detailed in the Graduate School handbook mentioned above) for depositing theses and dissertations. Plan on this activity taking at least a half day, longer if the graduate school requires changes. Since your committee is also likely to request changes, you may wish to wait until after you make their changes to have the Graduate School review your document. That timing will be entirely up to you.

However, the good news is that when you have made all of the changes and sent it online to the Graduate School, you will have most likely completed your Master of Science in Technical and Scientific Communication. Congratulations will be in order.

Attached (Attachment A) at the end of this document is a graphic illustrating the internship report process; also attached (Attachment B) are special instructions from the MTSC program regarding electronic deposit. Please be sure also to check the guidelines for electronic deposit on the Graduate School web site.

### **ENROLLMENT DURING INTERNSHIPS**

In order to satisfy the MTSC internship requirement, you must enroll for a total of at least six hours of English 701, Internship in Technical and Scientific Communication, during your tenure in the program. You do not, however, need to be enrolled in internship hours during your internship.

You may enroll for your six internship hours at different times (that is, in different semesters or during summers). However, you also may enroll for as many as 12 hours of internship credit in a semester. This could be advantageous if your sponsor requires you to be registered as a full-time student while performing the internship.

Because you may enroll for internship hours during more than one semester, the total number you take may exceed 12. However, you may not count more than 6 hours of internship credit toward the degree.

### **INTERNSHIP GRADES**

Internship hours are graded on an S (Satisfactory Progress)/ U (Unsatisfactory Progress)/ or P (Pass) basis. Before you have completed your internship report, you will receive grades of S or U for your internship hours; these grades are assigned by the Director of the program. Once your internship report has been approved by your committee, all of your internship grades will be changed by your committee chair to P. In assigning these grades, your committee chair will take into account the evaluations of your work provided by your employer and the progress you have made on your internship report.

## **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 students**

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.

### **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.**

Additionally, the intern will do the following:

- 1. The intern should reflect the additional information provided in Guideline 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.**
2. 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.

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**

If you have questions about any of the guidelines mentioned in this publication, please speak with the Director of the MTSC program.

**INTERNSHIP PROPOSAL CONTRACT** (for your information)

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:

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Address and telephone number of sponsoring organization:

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**II. Mentoring for the Intern**

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

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

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

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

Nature of the sponsoring organization's work:

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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.)

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

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

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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.