

# Undergraduate Professional Communication Internships in English

---

ENGL 4890 & 4891

## Why Intern?

English majors, minors, and certificate students: do you want to

- Apply your skills and knowledge as an English student in a professional workplace?
- Work alongside professionals and experience how professionals communicate in their jobs?
- Receive on-the-job mentoring along with academic support and professionalization before graduation?
- Build a portfolio that showcases your talents as a communicator?

If so, an internship might be the right choice for you.

*Students in English can earn three semester-hours of internship credit by completing a minimum of 140 hours of supervised, substantive, communication-related work in a professional setting. Each student can complete up to two internships (for a total of 6 credits).*

## What is an internship?

An internship is a “field experience” course: it’s an academic course (you earn course credit and work with a professor), but most of the work occurs at an internship “field site,” the professional workplace where you agree to intern.

Each internship requires 140 hours of work, which is about 10 hours per week in a regular semester. The work itself varies from workplace to workplace (and from intern to intern); you’ll work with the internship coordinator to determine your learning goals and find an ideal field site. You’ll also meet regularly with the internship coordinator to discuss how the work is going, to troubleshoot work tasks, to learn professional skills, and for help finding resources that will improve your internship learning experience.

A successful internship is a learning experience, not just a way to add a resume line (though it does that, too). It gets you out of your “comfort zone,” doing work that you aren’t already able to do at an expert level, but that you are prepared to learn with the right kinds of support. Your field supervisor and the internship coordinator provide that support.

## Who is eligible to complete an internship?

The internship counts as an undergraduate English elective toward the English major, the English minor, and the Certificate in Business and Technical Writing. Students not affiliated with English can also complete an internship for elective credit.

The best candidates for an internship are

- juniors or seniors (sometimes “rising sophomores”);
- academically strong (normally 3.0+ GPA, though exceptions are possible);
- strong writers and communicators;
- motivated, responsible, and self-disciplined.

## What kinds of tasks do interns perform?

Internship tasks might include any of the following, based upon what you, your field supervisor, and the internship coordinator agree upon:

- Writing content for internal and external audiences
- Editing (copy editing, proofreading, developmental editing) of existing documents
- Document design and production
- Social and digital media development and editing
- Marketing, publicity, and informational communication
- Writing press releases, notices, and campaign material
- Assisting with fundraising, grant writing and related research
- Website and multimedia development or maintenance
- Assisting with other communication-related tasks needed to keep the organization running smoothly.

Although every internship may include a mixture of more mundane and more exciting tasks, interns will not be primarily responsible for routine clerical activities (filing, answering phones, scheduling appointments).

## Where Can I Intern?

Any *supervised professional work setting* can serve as an internship field site. That includes local businesses, municipal or government offices, non-profit or civic organizations, churches, libraries, schools, university offices--any place where professionals use their communication skills to get things done.

Internship sites may be in the local area or elsewhere. English students have completed internships as far away as Peru (at the Fulbright Foundation office in Lima) and Washington, DC (at the Pentagon and at the library of the US Supreme Court). Many students who complete internships in the summers find placements in their hometowns.

You'll work with and report to a professional in the organization: a program director, managing editor, supervisor, volunteer coordinator, or manager who will assign tasks, review your performance, and

provide support for your work. Although your day-to-day work may be a mixture of closely supervised and more independent tasks, you'll always have the support and resources of professionals at your worksite who can "show you the ropes" and provide feedback on your work.

Past internship placements have included:

- local and regional businesses (Vidant Wellness Center; Greenville Utility Commission; Albemarle Hospital; area law offices)
- area nonprofits (the March of Dimes; United Way of Pitt County; Stop Human Trafficking of Eastern NC)
- regional civic organizations (Cornerstone Leadership Academy; Washington-Beaufort County Chamber of Commerce; Pitt County Arts Council)
- campus programs and organizations (Center for Academic Computing; ECU Undergraduate Marketing; Office of Technology Transfer)
- area publications (Mixer Magazine; Tar River Poetry; NCLR; Washington Daily News).

The sky's the limit: there are lots of experience-building and educational opportunities out there for students willing to stretch their abilities. The internship coordinator will help you find a great position and make the most of the experience once you're on board.

## How do I get started?

In the semester before you would like to complete an internship:

- Email the Internship Coordinator (Dr. Brent Henze; [TPCintern@ecu.edu](mailto:TPCintern@ecu.edu)) to schedule a meeting to talk about your interests and to assess your readiness for an internship.
- If you already have a resume prepared, bring it to the meeting, since it will help us to discuss your skills, interests, and goals. But you don't need to have a resume ahead of time.
- If you have a specific internship position in mind already, bring details about that position and we can discuss its suitability for internship credit. The internship coordinator will work with you and the prospective field supervisor to develop the position so that it fulfills the program's academic expectations while also serving your learning goals and the organization's needs.
- The internship coordinator will register you for internship course credit (ENGL 4890 for undergraduates; ENGL 6740 for grad students) after we have identified an appropriate internship plan and completed the necessary three-party internship learning contract.

Even if you're only thinking about the internship as a possibility, or if you won't be ready for awhile, come talk with me about your interests. We can talk about what you can do to prepare, even a year or two ahead of time. It's never too early to start planning!

***Interested? Have questions? Contact the Internship Coordinator, Brent Henze, at [TPCintern@ecu.edu](mailto:TPCintern@ecu.edu) to schedule a meeting to discuss whether an internship is a good elective for you.***