

Internships

NYCMER Peer Group for Docents, Intern and Volunteer Supervisors

Project: Best Practices for Internships

Outline of Questions for developing a Best Practices Toolkit for Internships

Please look at these questions to guide in developing a best practices document on Internships in NYC Museums and related institutions. Please think about your own past internships as well as your supervisory roles. Please make edits, clarify questions or add categories.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, many institutions are adjusting their internships to all or partly virtual. For questions relating specifically to these types of internships, see the questions in italics.

Your institution & the Internship program(s)

- What is your institution?

- What is the unit within the institution?
- Do your interns work for a term or school year?
- A shorter period such as Summer or Intersession only?

- Who determines the length and required hours of work?
- Who determines the scope of work?
- Do you repeat programs/projects or are they different each term? Are there repeat elements and/or short-term projects?

- Are there multiple internship/fellowship programs in your institution? If so, do they co-exist or communicate?
- How does the institution differentiate among programs?

Selection Process

- What functional unit manages the application process (Education? You? HR?)
- Calendar -- how much in advance do you start the search process in relation to the term of the internship?
- Applications-- what do you ask for, e.g. cover letter, CV, recommendations?
- Interviews in person? By phone?

- How/where do you advertise the internship program?
 - School/university partners? Teacher recommendations?
 - Non-academic groups?
 - Other projects, such as History Day?
 - Listings, such as NYFA Jobs?

- Do your requirements vary to accommodate scheduled projects? (e.g. preference for certain languages based on upcoming project)

Off-site or Virtual Internships

- *Will you adapt application formats or schedules to attract virtual interns?*
- *Do you require specific experience or skills for off-site interns?*
- *Are you expanding the geographic range of advertising for attracting virtual interns?*

Logistics for Intern Work

- In what parts of your institutions do the interns work?
 - Education? Exhibitions? Other?
 - Gallery work (tours, explainers, etc.)?
 - Other work with the public?
 - Other functional units (e.g. collections management, exhibitions, etc.)
 - Non-public facing museum work? (e.g. development, communications, etc.)
- How do you provide on-boarding and/or start-up training for interns?
- Do you have buy-in from other institutional staff?
- What budget is provided? What budget should be provided?
- What work space and equipment is provided? What equipment should be provided?

Logistics Specific to Off-site or Virtual Interns

- *What work space and equipment is provided? What equipment should be provided?*
- *What level of connectivity will the interns have to provide?*

Programming

- What topics are of most use for the permanent collection/upcoming initiatives?
- What can an off-site intern accomplish in the length of your summer?

- Can you provide intern experiences with other museum staff and programs, such as shadowing Development? Will there be seminars, reading lists, etc. that unify intern cohorts?

Programming for Off-Site or Virtual Interns

- *Will the interns need access to digital content from your colleagues' collections or divisions?*
- *What can an off-site intern accomplish in the length of your summer?*
- *Can you provide intern experiences with other museum staff and programs, such as shadowing Development? Will there be seminars, reading lists, etc. that unify intern cohorts?*

Payment

- \$\$ -- Are your interns paid?
 - Stipend, honorarium or salary?
- How do they track hours or work units?
- Who supervises time sheets/payments? if other than you, specify the approvals needed?
- Are your interns paid by their school or a third party?
- If interns are not paid, does your institution have plans for adding payment into the budget?

Supervision

- Are your interns required to be currently enrolled/matriculated students?
- Do you accept gap year or pre-graduate application interns?
- What are the reporting requirements? Who sets them (your institution or interns school/programs)?
- Do you determine or influence how many credits they receive for the internship?
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- Do your interns retain authorship of their research and internship projects?
- If not, do you clarify this with the intern and/or academic supervisor?
- How is your intern's time being structured?
- What kind of deliverables will you assign to the interns?

Supervision of Off-Site or Virtual Interns

- *How do you plan to supervise an off-site intern*
- *How does the fact that interns will be off-site change the application and selection criteria? e.g. writing samples, questions about self-motivated projects? Ensure that interns' advisors or academic supervisors understand the parameters of the revised program.*
- *How does the fact that interns will be off-site impact evaluation or grading?*

Communications

- Internal within the institution:
 - How often do interns and supervisors discuss progress and/or problems?
 - Do interns meet with other museum staff? For trainings, e.g. handling artifacts? For discussion of job functions?
- With educational institution:
 - How often do they meet with their academic intern advisor?
 - How often do you communicate with their academic advisors?
- Do they blog as part of the internship experience? About internship as part of course/school? Does the institution read/approve the blogs?
- Post-internship protocol (can interns ask for recommendations or references?)

Participants:

NYCMER Peer Group for Mentoring and Intern Supervision (now Docents, Interns and Volunteers Supervisor Peer Group)
NYCMER Peer Group for Students