

SITE SUPERVISOR'S GUIDEBOOK FOR SUPERVISING FIELD EXPLORATION EXPERIENCES



**Internship Office
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Thank you for your interest in the Saint Mary's University Experiential Education Program. By agreeing to supervise one of our students, you join the faculty and staff at Saint Mary's in providing a learning experience for an undergraduate college student. We hope you will become familiar with what we wish to accomplish, and we welcome your suggestions toward making our program productive for both our students and your organization.

Past experience and comments of former students and their supervisors indicate that some basic questions might occur to you about the nature of our partnership. We trust that the questions and answers below will help you to understand the nature of our program and what we are asking from you.

1. What is a Field Exploration Experience?

FIELD EXPLORATION Course 298

Field Exploration is a planned work experience for academic credit that provides students with the opportunity to explore a field and/or major and gain basic knowledge. This experience involves mainly “observation” and limited “hands-on” experience. Field exploration is generally part-time and is unpaid.

Students must have completed a minimum of 30 or more semester credit hours (**at least sophomore status**) before participating in field exploration.

No prerequisite of major credits is required to participate in field exploration.

Students must be enrolled at Saint Mary's at least **one semester** prior to participating in field exploration.

2. How can I/this organization benefit?

Many supervisors simply enjoy sharing their expertise and savvy in their role of professional mentor. In addition, some tangible benefits include:

- Year-round source of highly motivated pre-professionals
- Quality candidates for temporary or seasonal positions and projects
- Freedom for professional staff to pursue creative projects
- Flexible cost-effective work force not requiring a long-term employer commitment
- Proven, cost-effective way to recruit and evaluate potential employees

3. Who participates in Saint Mary's University Field Exploration Program?

This program was created in order for sophomores to have the opportunity to participate in experiential education. In general, juniors and seniors participate in internships (Course 496), an experience that tends to be more involved. All students who participate must meet a minimum GPA requirement and have the recommendation of their academic department before they can undertake an experience for academic credit. These prospective students represent a variety of academic majors.

4. *What other responsibilities and activities are required of the student for academic credit?*

Students are expected to initiate and negotiate a Learning Proposal and seek approval from you and their faculty internship supervisor.

The Learning Proposal guidelines are as follows:

Name

Term and year of experience

Name and address of the site

Name and phone number of your site supervisor

Description of your field experience, what you intend to learn, and what activities will allow you to learn.

Interns are subsequently required to submit their approved learning proposal, and a Reflection Paper upon completion of the experience.

The Reflection Paper guidelines are as follows:

This paper should be 4-5 pages in length

Documentation of the number of hours spent at your site

Discuss the activities you observed including any hands on experience that took place

What have you learned personally, academically, and professionally?

Discuss any insights you have about your likes and dislikes in the profession.

As a result of this experience, indicate any skills you developed.

Throughout the experience, students are encouraged to seek out assistance from you, their faculty supervisor, and the Director of Internships in order to realize their learning/working expectations.

Moreover, the student is expected to behave in a professional manner and in accordance with the policies, procedures, and calendar of the sponsoring organization.

5. *How many hours a week can students work?*

At minimum, students must work 45 contact hours for each credit earned. A student opting for 2 credits must work at least 90 hours before the experience is completed. The hours worked each week will depend on the number of weeks the student is eligible to work (a semester consists of 15 weeks).

6. *Can a student's work schedule be changed?*

You and the student can decide this. Students who are interning part-time, however, may have academic commitments that hinder schedule changes.

7. *What do the students hope to accomplish during the duration of their field exploration experience?*

Students who participate in this program do so for a variety of reasons. One of the most common reasons is a desire to explore career possibilities related to an academic field or to become more comfortable and confident in the work world outside of the university community. Another reason often expressed is the desire to develop and apply skills related to their career choice. Moreover, students may receive academic credit applicable towards graduation.

8. *What is expected of me as a supervisor?*

The **student** will be asked to develop a "learning proposal", in consultation with you, describing the specific skills or understandings s/he hopes to develop on the job. The purpose of this learning plan is to establish realistic expectations regarding the nature of the experience and may be modified if needed.

Along with the learning plan is the learning contract, which outlines the terms of the internship and the responsibilities of each of the parties involved in the internship. A sample of this document is attached.

In addition to consulting with the student about the learning proposal, we ask that you provide the student with an adequate orientation to your organization and to the duties he/she will be asked to undertake. Students also seem to fit in more quickly if they have work space assigned to them, where appropriate.

Twice a semester, we also ask for written feedback regarding the student's progress. Evaluation forms have been included for your use. These forms should be returned directly to the Internship Office. However, we encourage you to share your evaluations with the student. Students may also be asked to complete self-evaluations that you may find useful in the assessment process.

We hope that communication channels are open between you and the student at all times. We suggest you help insure there are times for feedback from each other during the semester, whether formally scheduled or not, in addition to the mid-term and final evaluations. If you feel communication is lacking, we encourage you to act immediately either by meeting with the student, the student's faculty supervisor, or the Director of Internships.

9. *How will my evaluation be used?*

Ultimate responsibility for grading students rests with Saint Mary's faculty. Your evaluation, however, serves three very important functions:

- It communicates to the faculty and to the student your perception of the student's strengths, learning needs, progress, and accomplishments;
- It helps the intern to assess his/her skills and to plan for the future;
- It assists in the ongoing process of evaluating and improving Saint Mary's Field Exploration Program.

A copy of this evaluation form goes to the student and to the faculty internship supervisor.

10. *What happens if this experience doesn't work out?*

We hope the interviewing process has helped you and the student to make a good decision about working together for the semester. Usually, students have the opportunity to interview with several possible supervisors so they have some basis for making their commitment to a particular placement. However, sometimes things do not work out as anticipated. If there are insurmountable problems with the experience, we hope you and the student will consult with the Director of Internships and make the decision to terminate, if necessary, within the first week or so of the semester. A later termination may result in the student losing credit for the program, which can delay graduation.

11. *Does the field exploration experience cost me anything?*

There is no requirement that students must be paid. We only ask that if students have duties that involve expenses, that you consider reimbursing them through your organization just as a regular staff member would be.

Organizations that do provide paid experiences disperse payment for work in various ways. Some pay an hourly wage directly to the students. Others make a scholarship donation to the university, which is then disseminated by the school to a specified student as financial aid. Yet others award a pre-set stipend to the student (or indirectly through the school) which is not necessarily related to the number of hours a student works.

12. *Who can I talk to if I have other questions?*

Internship Office Information

Office Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday (academic year)
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday (summer)

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Your time spent as a partner in our program is greatly appreciated and, we hope, well repaid!
Thanks!

