

Internship FAQs (updated 12 June 2018)

Internship coordination

What is the role of the Internship Coordinator?

The internship coordinator's role is to guide students through the process of choosing appropriate career development opportunities to meet their goals, including internships, volunteer activities, jobs, research experiences and networking; teach career skills in FW209 Career Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences; approve internships that meet your career goals, and facilitate learning during the internship.

What does FW 209 cover?

The internship coordinator teaches and works individually with each student in the course to explore current opportunities in their geographic and interest areas, refine their resume and cover letter to show transferable skills, and build skills to network locally.

Should I get in touch with my Academic Advisor if I have a question about internships?

No, contact the internship coordinator.

What do I need to do to get started on my internships?

Coursework required for internships

FW209 is a precursor to FW410 Internships. It helps students identify local organizations that may offer internships that align with their academic/professional interests and time/geographic constraints. The course also helps students prepare internship and job application materials specific to the fisheries and wildlife field.

Volunteer

Volunteering for a natural resources or animal focused organization is essential for students to do prior to applying for internships. This gives you experiences to put on your resume and makes you more competitive. Most students have at least one volunteer experience prior to landing an internship. Possibly, volunteer experience could be used as the exploratory internship. Discuss your situation with the internship coordinator.

What are the prerequisites for FW 209?

FW107 is the only enforced prerequisite to FW209 and must be taken first. Before taking FW 209, you should ideally have also **completed** the following: FW251 Principles of Fish and Wildlife Conservation, your Chemistry series, and at least **started** the Biology series).

When should I take FW209?

Take FW209 two terms before you plan to seek internships so that your resume, cover letter, and information are current when you begin to apply to internships. If you take FW209 too far in advance, organizations may change, your interest may change, and your qualifications may change.

What if I find an internship prior to taking FW209?

If an internship opportunity arises before you can take FW 209, email the internship coordinator. Include the following in your email request:

- Describe your academic/professional goals
- Share the internship position description
- Describe how the position supports your goals
- Request approval to take FW410 Internship
- Include your resume

What is the goal of the FW 410 internships?

Students gain professional-level skills and references to support them in seeking jobs after graduation. Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences is a hands-on profession and the internship is essential to gain hands-on experience. Employers do not usually ask for your transcript; they ask for your resume and internship helps you build your resume and develop a local professional network to get job referrals.

What is the point of FW410 Exploratory Internship?

To make local professional connections that can help you find future hands-on learning opportunities, but also to help narrow your academic and professional aspirations. Many students complete short-term volunteer experiences or attend a local professional conference for exploratory internship. Attending a professional conference is critical in helping students build a local professional network.

What is the point of FW410 Intensive Internship?

To help you build professional-level skills and references so you can advance professionally on your chosen career track. The experience must have enough depth and breadth that by the end of the experience, you can perform professional level tasks without supervision. Some students work a paid, seasonal position for one term, however students often have constraints related to work or parenting that preclude this; in this case, the student will have an internship that is part-time, volunteer and extended over several terms but has the same impact on your resume as a short-term, full-time, paid position.

How and when to register for FW 410 internships

When should FW 410 be taken?

As a general rule of thumb, students take FW410 **Exploratory** Internship within a few months of completing FW209 and take FW410 **Intensive** Internship a few months after the exploratory internship. Exceptions to this happen all of the time. Contact the internship coordinator to discuss the best timing for you.

Can I do it just before graduation?

It's a good idea to have your internship completed well before graduation, because 1) it may take some time to find one, and 2) you don't want this requirement to prevent you from graduating on time. The course FW209 Careers Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences should be taken just prior to or within a couple of terms of when you want to begin looking for your internship, so

plan accordingly.

How do I get credit for an internship?

You have to register for FW 410 Exploratory Internship and FW 410 Intensive Internship to get credit toward your degree. Registering for these classes requires approval by the internship coordinator.

How do I register for FW410 Internship?

Your internship must be approved by the internship coordinator. Once approved, you may register for FW410 Internship. For students who may be interning over several terms, consult with the internship coordinator to determine when it is appropriate to register for credit. Note that internship is a class and does require a certain level of time, skill development, and professional growth, just as any other course.

How long do I have to complete the internship?

The length of time it takes to complete the internship will vary with the position and the time you have to commit to the internship. Typically, most student complete this requirement between 3-6 months.

Can I stop out for a quarter of classes to complete my internship requirement?

Yes. Some students choose to stop out from classes to complete intensive internship but most continue to take classes.

Do I have to register for credit the same quarter I do my internship?

Yes, as a general rule, and you must complete your internship requirements at least two terms before you graduate. If the internship spans multiple terms, you will register in the term the internship ends.

Under certain circumstances (e.g., military), if you are doing a summer internship, you might be able to apply summer internship credits to fall term. Speak with the internship coordinator to see if this is an appropriate option for you.

Can I do more than one Exploratory Internship?

Yes, but you may only want to pay for the one credit course that is required. The internship coordinator will continue to work with you to help you gain professional experience even if you are not doing it for credit.

Can I do more than one Intensive Internship?

Yes, but you may only want to pay for the three credit course that is required. The internship coordinator will continue to work with you to help you gain professional experience even if you are not doing it for credit.

Will I be compensated monetarily?

Internships may be volunteer or paid. Internships designed to accommodate a student's schedule will generally require volunteering. Internships that accommodate an employer's schedule will generally be paid.

Can a student be paid or working in a paid position while getting internship credit?

Yes; seasonal biological jobs can be used for the intensive internship requirement. However, some students may not have the time or geographical flexibility to work in a paid seasonal position so they have to develop a local volunteer position that provides entry-level skills similar to a paid position.

Do we have to pay OSU tuition for the FW 410 Internships? Does financial aid cover the tuition for the internship?

Your internship courses are required for the degree program, and you register and pay tuition for them as you would your other courses. Similarly, if you are eligible for financial aid, the aid can be used to pay for the credits.

Is there funding for unfunded or low-funded internships?

Yes, OSU's College of Agricultural Sciences has a competitive internship award called the [E.R. Jackman Internship Support program](#) for students in low-paying or volunteer internships that contribute to their educational goals in natural resources. Funds may be used to help offset a variety of expenses including transportation, living expenses, projects, and research. Similarly, the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife also has some internship funds to award. See the [Funding Details](#) section on the internship resources page.

If you are currently volunteering (or will be soon)...

What if I'm already volunteering?

The experience may or may not apply to the internship requirement. You would need to reach out to the internship coordinator to see how it might apply. Include the following in your email request:

- Describe your academic/professional goals
- Share the internship position description
- Describe how the position supports your goals
- Request approval to take FW410 Internship
- Include your resume

Is it a good idea to log all volunteer hours that are in the Fisheries and Wildlife field?

Yes, it is a good idea to log volunteer hours. In most instances, volunteer hours count as qualifying experience on job applications. The number of hours for work and volunteer experience is one aspect that federal and state agencies use when evaluating applications. For example, for two people with the exact same experience, the person who worked/volunteered 40 hours will rank lower than a person who completed 400 hours. Specific activities to include in your log are examples of leadership, accomplishments, any products you created, skills used relevant to fisheries and wildlife, and presentations/public speaking. For hours worked, log the hours volunteered per week, months, and years on average. Record your supervisor's contact name, email, and phone number.

Non-traditional students' frequently asked questions

Many students in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife are often juggling full-time jobs,

children, pets, and mortgages with their education; most are not able to take seasonal jobs in distant locations like traditional (campus-based) undergraduates.

How can I complete my internships when I work, parent and attend OSU?

Flexible internship options that meet both the exploratory and intensive internship requirements are accepted as long as they facilitate appropriate professional development. Internships may be completed in a short, intensive time period or over an extended period with less intensity each week or month. The internship coordinator helps you evaluate what is effective for your goals.

How can I be effective during my internship when I still have to work, parent and take courses?

It is imperative that you demonstrate high performance during internships. Most students reduce or adjust their course load; some students “stop out” for a term of courses to do their internship. Be sure to establish a personal support system while balancing internship with personal and professional responsibilities. Tell your work supervisor that you have additional academic responsibilities, arrange back-up child care, request support from family and friends, and update your academic advisor on your internship status.

Won't younger, traditional students outcompete me for internships and jobs?

No. FW biologists and organizations recognize the experience and maturity that non-traditional students generally bring. For this reason, they are often more willing to accommodate the flexible schedules of non-traditional students. Non-traditional students often use an internship as a way to demonstrate their employability with a local organization they want to work for in the future.

What if I can't find an internship near me?

You will learn the skills to locate or create an internship in FW 209 Career Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences, but the internship coordinator is available to help you every step of the way, even outside of the class.

Every student in our program since it started in 2009 has met the internship requirements, and so can you. It is best if you develop a specific strategy to pursue (e.g., identify the organization, supervisor, skill sets, network, or project that will advance you on a chosen career track). **Stay in contact with the internship coordinator throughout the process.** Don't wait until you are frustrated.

One of the best ways to find internship opportunities is to attend a state-level conference attended by local professionals who are working in an area of career interest. Often a student meets a professional at the conference who then offers them the opportunity to gain experience and develop an internship.

Doesn't every professional want an intern?

No. It takes time to supervise an intern, so you will likely have to convince a supervisor that you are worth the time, even if you are volunteering. You have to determine how you can contribute your skills to benefit the organization and find a person with an appropriate skill set who is willing to mentor you.

What opportunities are available for students who are homebound or who have limited mobility?

Some of the possibilities for internships when students have limited mobility are data management/analysis, report writing, lab work, [Geographic Information Systems](#) (e.g., mapping, remote sensing) and image (e.g., trail camera) analysis. There is also the communications/public relations aspect: science writing, designing brochures, and social media are a few examples.

I have always wanted to work in game or predator management, but where I live currently and where I will probably live in the future does not or likely will not offer very many of those jobs. A backup plan is to work at the local zoo. Should I try to do two internships, one for each career path?

One of the purposes of the internship is to try out a career path to see if it is a good fit for you. It would be in your best interest to do both as they require different skill sets, daily routines, missions, pay, education, etc. If you are already thinking of a backup plan, then you might want to start with that because you may find out that you do not like your back up plan. You may find you only want to do your first choice, and then will need to reevaluate your priorities.

Another reason for gaining a variety of skills is that, despite our best plans, you never know where you will live or be willing to live, and you never know what jobs will be available in your area. You might be surprised with the opportunities available in your area. The work that you are interested in might fall under a different title or organization than you were expecting.

Can I do a detail at my current job and have it quality as an internship requirement?

It is possible to do work outside of your normal scope of duties within your current organization for internship. You will need to consult with the internship coordinator and your employer to find out if this detail will meet the internship requirements.

Examples of non-traditional (i.e., Ecampus) students and how they have worked internships into their busy lives

- S.E. volunteered with Blue Frontier Campaign, a marine conservation activist organization, to develop supporting curriculum for “50 ways to Save the Ocean” by David Helvarg that included compiling a 9th-12th grade Teachers Guide and developing new materials for K-2nd grade. “This is not a project Blue Frontier was working on until I came into the picture. I came up with the concept and have run with it. Being involved in a program that gets children interested in marine science and conservation is very exciting. This project has been an excellent exercise in confidence building, because I see that despite my lack of education, I am able to conceptualize, put into motion and complete a complicated project with large organizations like National Geographic and this gives me hope for a future career that will not depend on my level of education, but rather my expertise, experience and ability to produce.”
- A.W. volunteered with NOAA on the Penobscott River Restoration Project where she helped conduct marine mammal and sea bird surveys for 10-12 hours/day 1-3 days per week for 8 weeks. “I will be only able to work with NOAA on my days off and on some vacation time. Dr. X was OK with that and was glad for any help since he works solo and has no budget for help. I am doing all of this for free but the experience for me is invaluable.”

- J.B. volunteered for the Dept. Defense at Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB), Environmental Conservation Section. J.B. is a civilian employee at VAFB. His internship was to design and implement a sampling plan for Columbian black-tailed deer and prepare a deer management plan for VAFB to include harvest quotas, military operations, human safety and habitat carrying capacity. He worked for this supervisor as a part-time volunteer for seven months and when the supervisor retired, J.B. was asked to replace him but was not technically qualified until degree completion.
- J.L.S. volunteered with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County as the wildlife biology assistant intern for 1-3 days/week over several months. She assisted the wildlife staff (wildlife biologists, wildlife specialists, wildlife technician and wildlife aids). This internship included primarily field work as well as some minor record keeping. The skills she gained were radio telemetry (with Blanding's turtles and deer); setting up, baiting and moving turtle cage traps; blood sampling for DNA and micro-chipping Testudines (painted and snapping turtles); setting up mist nets with a decoy owl to try and catch a breeding pair of osprey to band and test blood for mercury, PCBs and organochlorine; and navigation to eastern bluebird, wren and sparrow nesting boxes to record clutch sizes and band chicks.
- S.A. volunteered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Wildlife Biologist, 1 day each week for 4-8 hours over 6 months.
- P.W. had a strong interest in GIS; she completed an independent project for Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to develop maps of key wildlife sites in state parks.
- R.M. worked as an independent volunteer with Eastern Box Turtle Conservation Trust to radio-track turtles; he located each turtle every two weeks but did it when it worked into his schedule.
- "Sorry I took a few extra days to complete the final assignments for internship, too much going on with work, kids, and their birthdays. It was a life changing experience and I am glad you mentioned volunteering to me!"
- "In the course of 11 weeks volunteering at the Forest Service, I put in 250 hours! This has currently landed me a paid position with a sister organization relating to the same project. Because I worked with the supervisors during my internship, I didn't even need to interview for it and the position was not released to the public!"
- "As a non-typical student I had a tough time finding any sort of internship that would fit into my real work schedule. Over time and talking to many different folks at various levels of local, state and federal governments I was able to devise a three-tiered approach that allowed me to get the skills I needed and balance all the duties."
- "There were no set objectives, as I could not guarantee my time due to my actual working hours. But what we worked out was that I would help on all weekend events (when I wasn't working my regular job) and would call him the day before I had a day off to see if they needed any help for my off day. It ended up working out well and I was able to meet and work with many of the fine folks at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service."