Internship Class Policies and Procedures

-General Information-

An internship is an excellent way to increase your skills, gain practical experience and network with professionals in your field. According to curriculum studies, internship experience and writing skills are the two most important elements in finding your first job after graduation.

Academic credit for completing an internship is available by enrolling in MMC6949 – Professional Internship. The course is designed only in a three-credit model, where 120 total hours will be spent performing duties at your internship site (averaging to 10 hours per week). There will also be an asynchronous departmental piece of the course, where you will be graded on assignments related to your internship experience. The class starts at the beginning of every semester and spans for a 12-week period, where students will then be given a pass/fail grade. Noncredit internships may be taken at any time and do not require department approval. All students completing an internship must have a GPA of 3.5 or above and be at the skill level necessary to complete the basic tasks assigned during the internship.

MMC6949 is offered every fall and spring semester, as well as during the summer C session. The passing grade (S) earned in this course will come from weekly internship emails, filling out an hours tracker, taking part in discussion forums, and completing a reflective assignment and SWOT analysis at the end of the semester. Supervisors will also need to fill out two mid-semester evaluations and submit a final evaluation, which will contribute to the overall grade in the course. The instructor for this course is Jorie Scholnik who can be reached via email at jorie.scholnik@ufl.edu. Jorie Scholnik will be able to answer any questions about internship opportunities and/or graded assignments in the course. To inquire about your eligibility to take the course and to formally enroll after your internship application is approved, contact Tiffany Robbert at trobbert@jou.ufl.edu.

To qualify for academic credit, an internship must be an on-the-job learning experience in relation to some aspect of online communication. For web design students, that could mean graphics, coding, SEO/analytics, application development, etc. For social media students, creating content, increasing followers, developing a style guidebook, etc could all apply. The intern must be supervised by a full-time employee of the sponsoring company who has an existing knowledge of online communications. The supervisor should not be a personal friend or relative of the intern, and should not be in the same company of an intern's full-time place of employment. If a student is already completing an internship, there must be projects assigned to fulfill the requirements for academic credit and 120 hours must be attainable during the semester of enrollment.

The preference is for the intern to physically work at the company's office, at the same location as the supervisor (Note: This does not have to be in Gainesville). However, applications for virtual internships will be evaluated on a case-by-case

basis and can be approved if the student and supervisor can verify the high quality of the internship.

-Enrollment Process for MMC6949-

Identify internship opportunities that relate to the job you want to have after graduation. In an ideal situation, the internship you obtain could lead to a direct hire after graduation so select something that interests you and gives you the opportunity to expand your skill set. Students will be responsible for finding their own internship. Please start looking for an internship in advance and reach out to a few places. Feel free to reference the email template requesting participation in an internship. Occasionally, internship opportunities may be circulated to everyone in the program via email or Facebook, but that is not a guarantee.

Draft a work schedule. Since you will be enrolled in an academic course, your internship must follow the academic calendar dates for the semester. This means that you must complete your internship hours for credit within the semester you are registered for between the first day of class and the day class ends. Internships cannot overlap semesters, and you must register and pay tuition for MMC6949 as you would for any other course.

Confirm with your internship supervisor that you will be able to work enough hours during the semester to fulfill the course requirement. **Interns need to commit 120 total hours at their site to fulfill this requirement (averaging 10 hours a week).** Please note that all hours to satisfy this requirement must be done before the last day of class in order to receive a passing grade in the course. Due to the importance of internship oversight, incomplete grades will only be given for extreme situations this course.

This does not prohibit you from starting and ending your internship on dates agreed upon by you and your employer. This also does not prohibit you from varying the number of hours you work each week. As long as you are registered for the course before the beginning of the semester in which the internship will take place and you fulfill all requirements, including submitting all reports and completing necessary hours, by the set deadline, it is fine from an administration standpoint.

For example, a student wishing to take MMC6949 during the summer might start their actual work hours in June, rather than in May when the summer semester usually begins. Another example could be a student who works 15 hours the week before spring break and then works five hours during break week in order to have the flexibility to travel. These situations will solely depend on the employer's needs and supervisor approval. Regardless, the student must be registered for the

internship at the beginning of the semester and start submitting weekly hour trackers immediately even if the hours haven't started. In the case of the opposite situation where a student finishes the hours early, all final reports can be submitted early, but grades will not be finalized until the end of the semester. Note that in any of these situations, the departmental portion of the class will still be held in accordance with University of Florida's academic calendar.

Submit an application. The application packet will consist of two parts ---

1. A completed MMC6949 Internship Application Form. You can receive the link to the form by emailing Jorie Scholnik at jorie.scholnik@ufl.edu or by locating the form on the website. To expedite the process, please email jorie.scholnik@ufl.edu after you submit the application so the review process can begin.

2. A business letter from your supervisor formally agreeing to your participation in the internship and describing your proposed job responsibilities and tasks. The letter should also confirm that your supervisor is aware of his/her responsibility to provide weekly feedback and submit evaluations during Week 4, Week 9, and Week 12 of the semester. You can reference the sample letter of acceptance from a supervisor so that your supervisor has a template. The letter must be on the organizational letterhead and signed by the intended supervisor of your internship. The internship supervisor can scan this letter to Jorie Scholnik at jorie.scholnik@ufl.edu.

An email from the supervisor will NOT be accepted as a signature from your supervisor. Applications will not be accepted or reviewed until both documents have been received by Jorie Scholnik and must be submitted by the deadline, **which is seven business days before the start of the semester.**

Early application submissions are encouraged. It is the student's responsibility to allow enough time to adjust the application in case the internship is denied or additional information is needed. Administrators reserve the right to contact the employer to verify the internship experience, and the approval process may take up to seven days after submission.

Receive Confirmation. If your application is approved, you will be registered for your internship by Tiffany Robbert and notified via email. Once you receive notification, please confirm your work schedule and designated time for feedback with your supervisor.

Please keep in mind that once your application is approved, you have agreed to complete the internship with the company specified. You may not change your company without approval, which will require extreme circumstances. If you wish to change your company at any time, you must submit a new application packet

immediately. You will not be able to receive a refund for this class after the drop/add period.

-Successfully Completing MMC6949-

Department Piece in Canvas. Students will be required to participate in the course Canvas shell throughout the semester (12 weeks). Students will receive a syllabus for the department portion of class on the first day of the semester. There will be assignments related to the internship component of the course, which students will need to complete to earn a grade. For example, there will be discussion forums on professional development topics related to your internship observations and forums where students will highlight their internship projects to receive feedback from the class. There will also be two recorded lectures at the beginning of the term to set the foundation for the graded assignments in the course. This portion of the course is completely asynchronous.

Send Weekly Emails. Professional communication is stressed in this course, especially given the content that we cover. It is a best practice in the workplace to keep the communication open and there is an added layer of importance if you are working remotely or don't see your supervisor on a daily basis.

Each week, students will copy me on two emails that will be sent to the supervisor – a weekly check-in and an end of the week summary. Please use a clear subject line. This will serve as a way to get into good workplace habits and as an added way for the instructor to gain more insight into the internship projects.

The reader should have a clear understanding of the tasks students are working on and completed during the week. For example, if you worked on updating a website, as opposed to just writing that, elaborate on what exactly you updated. Both style and tone should be business-like. Emails should be well written and free of grammatical and spelling errors. **The check-in email is due by Monday at 1pm (supervisor's time) and the end-of-week summary email is due by Sunday at 11:59pm EST.**

For the check-in email, you should include:

- The tasks you are going to work on for the week
- Any questions you may have about your tasks
- Anything in particular that you would like feedback on this week
- When you will check in about your progress
- This could also be a good place to note any technical issues you may be having
- Note: There is not a length requirement for this email.

For the end of week summary email, you should include:

- A note about what you completed during the week (this could also serve as a basis for the feedback you receive from your supervisor)
- You may also consider if any work needs a brief explanation.
- Any considerations for your supervisor based on your work.

Complete Weekly Hours tracker. At the beginning of the semester, the intern, supervisor and course instructor will be added to a shared Google Sheet that will serve as an hours tracker. In the Google Sheet, there will be a space for students to fill out their weekly hours and copy their end-of-week summary email. Feel free to add any skills you may have learned as well if it will provide clarification. There will be a space for the supervisor to confirm the hours, write a quick note about their feedback, and indicate if they want the course instructor to contact them.

You will complete and submit the shared Google Sheet as a file upload to Canvas each week of your internship, starting with the first week. <u>Please only upload the sheet for the appropriate week.</u> The Google Sheet is due by 11:59 p.m. EST on the Sunday of each work week. If you do not work a week during the course of your internship, you still need to send in a report stating, "I did not work this week." This will ensure accurate tracking of your weeks and hours. Sending in multiple weekly reports at one time is not acceptable, and will result in a lower grade for the course.

At the beginning of the semester, sit down with your supervisor and set up a designated time each week to go over your progress. You and your supervisor should devote 20-30 minutes to meet, and this meeting can take place in-person or virtually. I encourage you to be open to feedback because that is how we learn and grow professionally, and the skills you develop at your internship site will help you after graduation. <u>The supervisor should use the shared Google Sheet to serve as a foundation for your discussion each week.</u>

In the end, the hours reported on weekly forms must total the number of hours required for course completion. Students are responsible for tracking internship hours. Reports submitted with incorrect calculations or missing information will be returned for correction. There should not be any "anonymous users" on the Google Sheet. Students need to submit a weekly hours tracker for every week worked, even if the 120 hours requirement is met earlier in the semester.

Submit Mid-Semester Evaluations. Mid-semester evaluations from your supervisor are due by the Sunday at 11:59pm of Week 4 and Week 9 of the semester. The link to this form and the password will be located on the modules tab in Canvas. It is the student's responsibility to ensure the form is properly

submitted. **Please note that receiving satisfactory/unsatisfactory evaluations is linked to your final grade in the course.**

Submit End-of-Semester Internship Assignment and Evaluations.
Students will answer a series of questions on Canvas about their internship experience. The questions will be self-reflective in nature. The focus of the questions will be on the internship's value, the skills learned, and how this experience will be applied after graduation. Students will also comment on anything they liked and/or disliked about the internship experience.

One question in particular will include space for students to conduct a professional SWOT analysis after completing the internship. Students will have the opportunity to reflect on their pre-internship assessment and if their intended goals were reached. Other questions will highlight a favorite work sample from the internship and allow for discussion about what was learned professionally from the internship in regards to best practices in the workplace.

The answers should be written in paragraph form and the SWOT analysis should be included as a chart. Since this is the final component of the course, it is important for this assignment to have a business-like tone and contain proper grammar.

At the end of your internship your supervisor will also submit two documents --- a letter of evaluation of your performance (including confirmation of the total hours worked) and the Final Intern Evaluation Form (the link to the form will be located in the Modules section of Canvas). This supervisor must be the same supervisor you listed on your application. A sample letter of evaluation will be posted on Canvas for you to give your supervisor to reference. The letter must be on the organization's letterhead and signed by the supervisor. Because the letter requires a signature, an email will <u>not</u> substitute for this requirement. The letter can be addressed to your instructor and should be emailed to jorie.scholnik@ufl.edu.

<u>I highly recommend</u> that the supervisor's final evaluations are submitted at least one week before the deadline so there is room to contact your supervisor if any questions arise. It will be the <u>student's responsibility to remind the internship supervisor</u> that he or she must write a letter of evaluation on the intern's performance and work as well as complete the Final Intern Evaluation Form.

-Additional Information-

- No retroactive credit will be awarded for work you completed prior to the beginning of the semester in which you are registered for MMC6949.

- On the flip side, hours worked at an internship site after the set deadline for completing MMC6949 requirements will not be counted toward satisfactory completion of the course.

- An "I" (incomplete) grade will be given <u>only in circumstances deemed exceptional</u> by your instructor and after a new written agreement to complete the course requirements has been signed by the student, supervisor, and the instructor. Simply being unaware of the rules within this document or the inability to complete an overly ambitious work schedule set by the student will not be deemed exceptional. All incompletes must be rectified during the next semester. An "I" grade will not be changed to a passing grade until the end of the next semester or session.

- Even though internships are encouraged, no more than one three-credit internship may be completed to satisfy graduation requirements. You need to find one employer who is able to satisfy all hour requirements during one semester.

- **Internship supervisors should have an existing knowledge of the field** so the internship is a learning experience with set projects and direction. Students should not be in a situation where they are just using their existing knowledge to help a company who feels at need for services.

- Internship supervisors should not be a friend or family member.

- Internship sites will not be approved if a student is already working for the company or contracts out/consults with the company. If a student has a pre-existing internship with a company, projects must be outlined to satisfy the requirements related to the semester of enrollment. In particular, this is a situation where the department may contact an employer directly. **Violation of this policy will result in an automatic failing grade in the course.**

- **Your instructor or any administrator in the graduate program reserves the right to contact your internship supervisor at any time to discuss the progress of the internship, the tasks assigned, the hours worked, etc.**

- If you experience any situations during your internship that you perceive as uncomfortable or of potential harm, please contact your instructor immediately. Students will not be penalized for refusing to carry out inappropriate and/or unethical duties assigned by their supervisor or another employee of the sponsoring organization.

- If your supervisor changes during the course of your internship, please contact your instructor immediately. In addition, your new supervisor will need to contact the instructor to confirm that he/she is now acting as your direct supervisor.

- If you are having issues with your organization that hinder you from completing your requirements, please contact your instructor immediately. Each situation will be handled on a case-by-case basis. If a situation arises that you need to stop working with your organization, please contact the department to make arrangements. If you wish to change your organization due to circumstances out of your control, you must contact your instructor because each organization must be approved.

Neither the graduate program, nor the department faculty, nor the University of Florida is responsible for any personal injury, loss, or death while you are engaged in the internship

-Frequently Asked Questions-

Q: Do I have to find my own internship?

> **A:** Yes. Please start looking for an internship in advance and reach out to a few places. The hope is that your internship will correlate to what you want to pursue after graduation so you gain more marketable skills and an excellent portfolio. Feel free to reference the email template requesting participation in an internship. Occasionally, internship opportunities may be circulated to everyone in the program, but that is not a guarantee.

Q: Can I get credit for a paid internship?

> **A:** Yes! In fact, paid internships are strongly endorsed by the program. You are completing this internship in the later portion of the program so your work will add value to the sponsoring organization. The rate of pay will vary depending on the company.

Q: Should I take a paid or unpaid internship?

> **A:** The decision is entirely yours. Pay is not a factor in approving internships. Some students report that sponsors of unpaid internships are more flexible about work schedules. In contrast, sponsors of paid internships might be more likely to treat their interns as regular members of their staff. Like any situation, consider your expenses and the fact that you are paying tuition for this class.

Q: Do I have to work during standard business hours?

> **A:** Nope. This program values flexibility. The hours that you work will be entirely up to you and your supervisor. You just have to satisfy the total number of hours required to pass the class. When you submit your original

forms, you will note your anticipated working hours, along with the start and end date of your internship.

Q: Can I complete a virtual internship?

A: The preference is for the intern to physically work at the company's office, at the same location as the supervisor (Note: This does not have to be in Gainesville). However, we are a virtual program and understand that work can be accomplished in that environment. Applications for virtual internships will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and can be approved if the student and supervisor can verify the high quality of the internship.

Q: Can I complete the departmental piece of the course early if my internship ends early?

A: No. The departmental piece of the course spans the duration of the 12-week semester. You can submit your final assignment early, but you will still need to actively participate in discussion forums.

Q: For web design students, can this course be substituted for the MMC6939 – Strategic Communication: Ethics and Concepts course?

A: Yes, this is correct.

Another option: This course can also be taken in addition to the capstone course in the last semester to satisfy credits for financial aid if needed (in this situation, students would take Global Strategic Communications too).

Q: Can I audit the department portion of the class and not complete an internship?

A. Unfortunately, that is not possible. The department portion of the class is reserved for those paying tuition for the class.

Q: Do I have time to complete an internship with my work schedule?

A. I encourage completing an internship, but it's not for everyone. You do need to be aware of your other commitments and how much time you have to devote. This class takes the same amount of time as other courses in the program, but the hours are spent differently. The time you would normally spent reading, completing projects, attending longer lectures will be substituted for the time spent working at the internship.

Q: How are students graded in this class?

A. This class will be graded on a pass/fail basis. You receive credit toward your graduation requirements for this class. The only difference is that you don't receive a letter grade, which means your GPA is not impacted. Both assignments from the department and internship portions of the class will be factored into your overall grade. Students must receive at least an 85% in the course to pass.