

Professional Writing Internship FAQ

1. Are internships required for PW majors?

No, but we strongly (strongly!) encourage you to complete at least two internships or similar professional development experiences before you graduate. We recommend this because

- Internships provide a crucial opportunity to connect your classroom learning to the professional world.
- Internships can help you to figure out what types of jobs you want (and don't want) to pursue.
- They are important for landing your first job. These days, employers want to hire people who've already proven they can thrive in a professional environment, even for entry-level positions. A college graduate who has no experience outside the classroom will be at a disadvantage.

2. Will the PW program find an internship for me?

No, but we will connect you to resources that allow you to find available opportunities, and we can work with you to prepare key application materials such as resumes and cover letters. We maintain a robust network of alums and partner organizations who often send us internship postings; in many instances, they are specifically looking to hire PW majors.

3. What counts as an internship?

Because internships are not a formal requirement of the PW program, we have no specific criteria for what makes something count as an internship, but here are a couple of general guidelines to use.

- You should intern with an established organization or business that has a physical workspace or well-integrated digital workspace. If you are telecommuting, you should have regular access to your supervisor(s) to get assignments and feedback.
- Your job duties should primarily involve professional writing-related tasks, not general office tasks such as answering phones, filing, running errands, or doing data entry.

By the way, your position might not actually be called an "internship," but a job, project, freelance assignment, or something else. That doesn't matter; the above criteria are what counts. If you're ever unsure if an internship opportunity seems worthwhile, feel free to contact Dr. Ritz to discuss it.

4. Is there a way to do an internship as part of a study abroad or study away program?

Yes! Each summer the PW program runs an internship program in London. Students who enroll are placed into a high-value PW internship, provided with room and board, and complete 6 credits of PW courses. The College of Arts and Letters also offers programs that will place you in an internship and secure housing for you in other US cities and abroad.

5. How soon should I apply for my first internship?

We recommend that you to begin applying for PW internships as soon as you have completed WRA 202, WRA 210, and WRA 360.

6. What time of year should I apply for an internship?

You can apply year round. Applications for summer internships typically open after January 1 and run through the spring. There are also internships available on campus and in the Lansing region during the fall and spring semesters. Application deadlines for these vary, though typically they run anywhere from three months to one week prior to the start of the semester.

7. Can I be paid for an internship?

Many internships are paid, typically in the \$8-10/hr range. There are still many unpaid internships as well, especially in major cities where there are larger pools of applicants. If you complete an unpaid internship as an MSU student you can also apply for a grant through the MSU Federal Credit Union. See here for more information:

<http://careernetwork.msu.edu/jobs-internships/Internship-opportunity-award.html>

8. Is there a way to get course credit for my internship?

Yes. You can enroll in WRA 493 Professional Writing Internship concurrently with your internship. WRA 493 is online, asynchronous, and class activities are designed to help you get the most out of the internship, especially in terms of preparing to represent the internship when you hit the job market. You can take the course for 1-3 credits, and it can count as one of your 3 required PW electives.

9. Some internships are designed for students who already have experience. How can I get that experience before I've interned anywhere?

It's an age-old conundrum: How do you get work experience when organizations only want to hire people who already have it? As a PW student you have two constructive ways to solve this riddle. In your PW core courses you'll gain skills and knowledge that are directly relatable to many PW internships. You also have the opportunity to work on a PW Project Team. These teams are no- experience-required and are open to all PW students. They give you a chance to learn and practice key PW skills valued in many PW internships and also provide an opportunity to gain a resume entry and PW faculty reference. To get connected to a PW Project Team, contact Dr. Ritz.

10. What are the best ways to diversify my internship experiences?

One of the advantages of doing multiple internships is that you can experience many different kinds of jobs and workplaces. Here are a number of ways to diversify your internship experiences:

- By location: For example, MSU campus; Lansing area; major US city; abroad
- By organization type: For example, MSU department/unit; small local business; state government office; national nonprofit organization
- By PW skill set: For example, web designer; social media strategist; copyeditor; technical writer

11. Is there anything I should do once my internship is over?

Yes.

- Be sure to thank your supervisors and co-workers and find ways to bring them into your professional network through LinkedIn and other means.
- If appropriate, ask your supervisors for a review of your performance and ask if you may list them as references on your resume.
- Integrate your internship experience into professional materials such as your resume, cover letters, and portfolio. It's a good idea to get some help with this, either from the MSU Career Services Department or by meeting with Dr. Ritz