



Guidelines for Pre-Program Internships

Purpose

These guidelines are intended to aid internship supervisors and interns in defining goals, parameters, and expectations for pre-program internships.

Pre-program internships provide experience in at least one aspect of conservation work, including but not limited to preventive care/collections management, examination/documentation, research, treatment, and/or outreach. Pre-program internships are intended as an introduction to the profession and as preparation for aspiring conservators interested in pursuing graduate studies. In many cases, pre-program internships are pre-requisites for application and admission to graduate programs in conservation and must meet specific requirements.

General Guidelines:

- Ideally, the intern's work should be compensated monetarily and/or carry academic credit.
- Internships must be adequately supervised by a conservation professional.
- The responsibility for all decisions rest with the supervisor, not the intern.
- Supervisors are encouraged to act as mentors, supporting and facilitating the intern's exploration of and preparation for a career in conservation.
- Goals for the internship should be clearly established and agreed upon by intern and supervisor ideally prior to or at the start of the internship.
- The start and end dates of the internship period should be clearly stated from the outset as well as vacation and sick leave policy. Days and hours per week should be agreed upon prior to beginning work.
- The work environment must be safe with all participants committed to adhering to prevailing health and safety regulations.
- When possible, internships should provide a range of experiences which may include different materials and object types, skills and tasks, project scopes, locations and settings, discussions of decision-making and theoretical approaches as well as applied work, etc.
- All work should be documented, and copies of that documentation, including images, should be provided to the intern.

The roles of supervisor and interns are outlined as follows:

Supervisor expectations:

- Provide monetary compensation or academic credit, when possible.
- Provide supervision and coordination of internship activities.
- Provide exposure to and experience with practical skills and ethical decision-making. The interns should be introduced to the [AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice](#).
- Demonstrate and explain [essential competencies for conservation](#).
- Introduce the intern to national and international conservation organizations such as the American Institute for Conservation, its committees, specialty groups, and networks.
- Provide a supportive, positive environment during the internship.

- Clearly state the workplace's relevant policies, including safety procedures, dress code, and use of social media.
- Include the intern in activities, projects, and conversations that are appropriate to the skill-level and best interests of the intern.
- Provide appropriate guidance regarding health and safety. Supply necessary personal protective equipment.
- Encourage and provide time for interns to participate in professional development activities.
- If necessary, verify that the internship meets the pre-requisites for applications to selected graduate programs.
- Review and provide constructive feedback on intern portfolios and applications to graduate programs in conservation.

Intern expectations:

- Be respectful of the internship opportunity and mindful of the supervisor's time.
- Be aware of the fragile sensitive nature of the objects examined and treated.
- Demonstrate curiosity, a positive attitude, and willingness to learn.
- Respect work hours and be responsible for assigned tasks.
- Focus on activities and limit use of personal devices to break periods.
- Communicate openly with supervisor. Voice any concerns directly and without hesitation.
- Dress appropriately for the activity and work environment.
- Be mindful of personal safety and safety of others. Use personal protective equipment when required.
- Seek opportunities for professional development in addition to the acquisition of specific skills.
- Discuss with the supervisor the dissemination of all information both within the workplace and on social media platforms.
- Participate in conservation outreach only as reviewed and pre-approved by the supervisor, including visible conservation, blogposts, social media, etc.

Possible internship activities:

Interns can and should undertake a variety of conservation-related tasks. Not all internships will provide experience with all aspects of conservation. When possible, internships should provide a range of experiences, which may include different materials and object types, skills and tasks, project scopes, locations and settings, etc. Interns may be assigned individual projects or may contribute to large-scale and/or long-term projects. The following list includes examples of the many activities and topics that may comprise a pre-program internship.

Please note that in many institutions and collections the following activities are not distinctly assigned to conservators/conservation and may overlap with the responsibilities of other individuals and departments. The following categorization of tasks is intended to organize related activities for clarity.

Conservation Activities:

- Object examination
- Condition reporting
- Photographic and written documentation
- Materials analysis or testing, often in collaboration with scientists
- Testing and evaluation of materials and methods for treatment
- Preparation of conservation materials, such as adhesives or cleaning solutions
- Construction of protective enclosures and/or display mounts and mats

- Exhibit installation/deinstallation
- Discussion of proposed treatment with owner or curator
- Treatment steps (stabilization, structural support, humidification, reshaping, consolidation, cleaning, joining, coating, compensation, toning, aesthetic integration, etc.)
- Research and reading about object, treatment process, etc.
- Pest or mold remediation
- Public outreach (workshop, presentation, etc. for public audiences about conservation)
- Experiencing the role of conservation within institutions (interaction with administrators/curators/registrars/designers/educators, loan process, exhibition planning/exhibition, acquisition/deaccession, etc.)

Registration Activities:

- Object handling
- Object labeling
- Inventory
- Use of collections databases
- Repatriation documentation & activities

Collections Care Activities:

- Environmental preventative care (Relative Humidity (RH), temperature, light, pollutants, etc.)
- Environmental monitoring (hygrometers, light meters, dataloggers, blue wool standards, etc.)
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Storage housings
- Storage or exhibit maintenance (dusting, cleaning plexiglass, etc.)

Professional Development Activities:

- Write blogs and/or social media posts about internship projects
- Visit labs
- Meet and/or interview conservators
- Attend lectures, conferences, exhibitions, workshops
- Gain familiarity with professional literature
- Join and participate in American Institute for Conservation (AIC) as well as sub-groups such as the Emerging Conservation Professionals Network (ECPN)
- Join and participate in regional conservation groups
- Become acquainted with graduate programs through communication and/or on-site visits

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