



Guidelines for Mentors

The following are suggestions to all mentors to provide a safe, productive, and rewarding internship experience. Every internship is different, but we feel that these general approaches work well for most organizations and students.

Start with SMART goals to define your project and deliverables

SMART goals stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. Undergraduates students do best with focused projects that are achievable in a semester with several interim deadlines. Even if your project is research-focused and you're not sure where it might lead, set interim research deadlines to allow your intern to present their findings.

Help your intern feel like they are part of your organization

Interns want to get a feel for what it's like to be a real employee of your organization. Invite them to meetings and office gatherings, if possible. Even if your intern is working remotely, try to include them in meetings with other people in your organization. If your intern is a great fit for your organization, you should feel free to offer them an extension for the next semester or summer.

Provide Guidance and Feedback

Your intern wants to perform well and do good work for you. Let them know how they're doing. Your experience and wisdom is of great value to the intern, so feel free to offer them career advice and mentorship. Set up a regularly scheduled meeting to check in with them on their progress. Keep those communication lines open. Most internship-related difficulties stem from communication-related issues between intern and mentor.

Encourage your intern to build a professional portfolio

If your project allows, encourage your intern to add their deliverable(s) to their personal portfolio, so that they have something they can show future employers. If the experience goes well, you could offer to write them a recommendation letter for future employment or research opportunities.

Contracts

EcoStudio students will need to choose whether or not they will do your internship for credit or not-for-credit. We have separate contracts for both scenarios. In either case, please keep in mind the following:

- Try to include as much detail as possible for the project description, duties/responsibilities, and deliverables. Whenever possible, try to lay out a timeline for the semester with interim deadlines.
- Provide start and end dates for the internship. Whenever possible, try to get your intern to think about their weekly schedule. What days and times will they be available to work on the project? While these may change once the project has started, the process of thinking about the work week is beneficial to both intern and mentor.
- Let your intern do most of the writing on the contract! It's a good exercise for them to fill out the contract, and it will save you some time! In particular on the for-credit contract, students need to write about how the project relates to their career goals in their own words.

EcoStudio will send periodic check-in emails to see how things are going. Please take advantage of this opportunity to provide some interim feedback. We can help fix issues before they turn into major problems if you let us know.

For credit students will not receive a grade for this experience. It is Pass/Fail only. We will send you a link to a survey at the end of the semester to provide some feedback on your student and the overall experience.

Links

- For credit contract (fall/spring semesters):
https://ecostudio.unc.edu/docs/ENEC_Independent_Study_Learning_Contract_EcoStudio.docx
- For credit contract (summer):
https://ecostudio.unc.edu/docs/ENEC_Independent_Study_Learning_Contract_summer.docx
- Not-for-credit contract:
<https://ecostudio.unc.edu/docs/not-for-credit-internship-contract.docx>