

Guidelines for Computer Science 399 Internship and Computer Science 490 Practicum

Frequently Asked Questions

- *What is the difference between Practicum and Internship?*
Practicum is an individual project-based course. You write a project proposal, carry out the project, and report on your progress throughout, under appropriate supervision. Typical projects include assisting faculty with research, and faculty-supervised work on pet software projects. The Internship course allows you to earn credit for work experience in a professional environment. Significant training and/or mentoring must occur.
- *What are the prerequisites?*
Both courses are restricted to students who have completed 75 credits. You must also have completed at least six credits of upper-level CS courses (300 or 400 level). In addition you need a CS GPA of at least 3.0 for Internship.
- *How do I enroll in Practicum or Internship?*
Talk to the CS faculty member serving as the Practicum/Internship coordinator. For Internship you need to complete the application form and get a letter describing the internship duties and responsibilities from your employer. For Practicum you need to write a project proposal. Upon approval of your application or proposal, the CS department staff will enroll you in the appropriate course.
- *Can I do a Practicum or Internship in the summer?*
Both courses are offered every fall, spring, and summer semester. Most students working on a practicum or internship in the summer choose to sign up for credit during the subsequent fall semester in order to avoid paying summer tuition. Remember that you must have your practicum or internship approved *before* you begin. The deadline for enrolling in the courses is the end of the fourth week of the fall or spring semester, or the end of the second week of the summer semester.
- *When is the Practicum or Internship over?*
The courses are officially seventeen weeks long during the fall and spring semesters. This means you have until the end of the interim period to complete the work. Your grade will not be recorded until the end of the interim period. Failure to turn in reports and/or complete your oral presentation will result in a grade of Incomplete.
- *What if my practicum project gets behind schedule?*
At the end of the semester your final report should indicate the work that has been

successfully completed and the work that remains to be done. A course grade will be assigned based on the quality and quantity of work that has been completed. It is understood that schedules can slip and project requirements often change along the way.

- *Who is the Practicum/Internship coordinator?*
During the summer and the fall semester, it is the CS department chair. During the spring semester it is another CS faculty member. The coordinator is listed on TitanWeb as the “instructor” for CS 399 and CS 490.
- *How do I find a practicum project or internship?*
Talk to CS faculty members about assisting them in their research projects. Check for internship opportunities on TitanGold and at the Career Services office. Attend the job fairs sponsored by Career Services. Discuss your project idea with the Practicum/Internship coordinator to see if it qualifies as a practicum.
- *I do not have a 3.0 GPA in Computer Science. Can I still do an Internship?*
Comp Sci 399 requires a Computer Science GPA of at least 3.0. You may earn credit in Comp Sci 499 Practicum for work done in an “internship” position. The work must be on a well-defined substantial project.
- *What writing assignments are required?*
Both Practicum and Internship are Writing Emphasis courses. One credit of your semester grade is based on your writing. You will get feedback on your writing and be expected to revise it. Both Internship and Practicum require at least three progress reports and a final report.
- *How long should the reports be? How should reports be organized?*
For progress reports the objective of the progress report is to describe the internship/practicum activities for the previous period. A period is a milestone for a practicum and generally one month for an internship. The minimum length for a progress report is 1,200 words of original text. Graphs, diagrams, and the like may be included for clarity, but they don’t add to the word count. You may double space for readability. The format of the report is a paragraph form. Do not simply list activities item by item or day by day. The description should be free of misspellings and grammatical errors. Refer to co-workers formally, such as Mr. Smith or Ms. Jones; include their job titles and relationship to you in their first reference. The description should describe your work activities succinctly and clearly. Describe any difficulties, failures, and successes. If you encountered unforeseen problems, how did you resolve them, or how do you plan to deal with them? If this is an internship, include aspects that met or did not meet your expectations of the internship experience. If you were asked to do something that is not part of the job description, such as sweep floors, include that in the description.

For final reports the objective is to summarize the overall experience, including the

work you accomplished and your assessment of it. What did you learn? For a practicum, did you complete the project as specified? If not, why not? Were there any additional features that were not included in the original proposal? For an internship: what you learned; your assessment of the value of the internship; whether you would recommend this organization to other students; which Computer Science/MIS courses were most helpful to you; are there computer courses that you believe would be valuable but are not offered now. The format is the same as for the progress reports. The minimum length is 2,500 words.

- *When are reports due?*
Reports are due to the Internship/Practicum Coordinator at times determined by the Coordinator at the beginning of each semester. It is the responsibility of the student to turn the reports in on time.
- *Do I have to do an oral presentation?*
All Practicum and Internship students must present a summary of their experience to the CS faculty and students in person.
- *What should I talk about in my oral presentation?*
Your oral presentation will be scheduled for a 20-minute time slot. Your formal presentation should last 15 minutes, and you should allow 5 minutes to answer questions. Don't make your presentation overly technical. Your audience will be composed of computer science instructors and students. Start by providing the background leading up to your project. If it is a practicum, what motivated you to choose this topic? If it is an internship, what kind of company are you working for and what specific needs did they want addressed by your project? Then provide an overview of the design of the software you wrote for your project. If it was one large program, what was its underlying structure? If the development was object-oriented, describe the key classes and how they interacted. If the software you wrote consisted of several smaller applications, describe any unifying relationships between them. For example, did they have to coordinate their access to the same database? How were they all related to the original goals of your project? Finally indicate to your audience the greatest challenges you faced in your project and how you overcame them.
- *Should I sign a contract with my employer?*
It is standard for employers to protect their intellectual property with non-disclosure agreements. Contracts between students and employers for software systems, however, should be avoided. Software contracts are problematic even for professional consultants and software firms. A large percentage of professional software projects go over budget and get behind schedule. As a Practicum/Internship student you are gaining practical experience, not acting as a professional consultant. Both you and your employer should understand that this is a learning experience.