Developing a Learning Contract

The Learning Contract is the main document that solidifies the relationship between you, the site, and Macalester College. Think of the Learning Contract as the syllabus for your internship. It represents a description of learning goals, specific strategies for achieving those goals and methods for documenting their accomplishment. In return for an opportunity to learn at a site, you carry out agreed upon activities and projects. You are negotiating what you want to learn, what the supervisor needs done and outcome measures your faculty sponsor wants you to complete to demonstrate what you have learned.

You may want to write a first draft of the contract and then share it with your site supervisor and faculty sponsor for suggestions and approval before producing the final version. Complete the form neatly and thoroughly. It is important that objectives, strategies, and evaluation methods be realistic, appropriate, meaningful and measureable. Write one sentence for each goal or "Objective" and number them so that number one under "Strategies" and "Evaluation" correspond to the first objective and so on. See the information below for further directions on completing specific parts of the form.

Learning objectives
Internship goals or objectives usually describe what you intend to learn through your internship. Be specific. You should develop three to five objectives that address the range of your interests, and may include some of the following:

- Are you looking to improve or develop skills, expand knowledge of a specific field, and/or apply or test a particular body of knowledge?
- Are you interested in testing a career interest and your own suitability for that career or trying to decide what you want to major in and/or clarify the direction of your remaining college years?
- Are you interested in learning how a particular company, organization or industry works?

Learning tasks and strategies
Describe the specific process for what you will do to achieve your goals. You can use more than one strategy to meet each objective.

- Will you undergo training? How many hours?
- Will you be working on a specific project?
- Will you ask your faculty sponsor to recommend certain materials, books, and articles for you to read?
- Will you attend any related conferences or meetings?
- Do you plan to interview professionals or experts about careers they have chosen?
- Will you ask people to observe you at work and give feedback and suggestions?
**Evaluation and learning outcomes**

Describe how you will demonstrate to your faculty sponsor the progress made towards each objective, making sure these activities are appropriate, realistic, and measurable. At a minimum, these measures should include regular contact with the professor, some form of ongoing journaling, and a summary end-term reflective paper. Also consider:

- How will you know and show others that you have achieved your learning objectives?
- Will you compile records of your activities throughout the internship (e.g. reports or other written materials you have prepared for the organization, notes on training sessions, staff meetings, conferences, other’s comments on your work)?
- Will you organize data collected from the internship into a research project?
- Will you describe your final project/activity and components for a final grade?
- Will you summarize a journal or your experience into a final, reflective experiential learning paper examining the lessons learned from academic, professional, and personal perspectives?
- Will you prepare and give a presentation for a seminar or a class?

**Evaluation and Grading**

The site will participate in a mid-term evaluation (except in January). The goal of this evaluation is to determine if the internship is on track and if there is a need for clarity in terms of goals or performance. Near the end of the semester and conclusion of your internship, you and your site supervisor will receive a final evaluation form to complete about your internship experience.

These completed evaluations will be shared with your faculty sponsor who utilizes feedback from you and your site supervisor about your performance during your internship to determine a final grade for your internship.

Most departments award letter grades for internships. Some departments implement a pass/fail grading system for internships. Consult the College Catalog for more details regarding grading of internships for the department in which you registered for internship credit.

The faculty sponsor assigns the grade for the internship, taking into account the following sources of information:

1. Feedback received from the internship site supervisor via mid-term and final evaluation forms;
2. Feedback from the student based on the self evaluation form;
3. Ongoing communications with the student during the course of the internship; and
4. The quality of learning outcomes (assignments) as defined in the Learning Contract.