

Guidelines and General Requirements for Sustainability Studies Internships

The SUST 395 Sustainability Internship course is a means by which students may earn 1-6 hours of academic credit through an internship experience related to the interdisciplinary field of Sustainability Studies. Students may perform work at a sustainability-related organization, on a relevant project, and/or for a sustainability professional; the possible options here are both many and various. Proposed internships by students or sponsoring individuals/organizations must first be approved by the SUST Program Director, who will provide course registration information to the student. Internships may be paid or unpaid; either is acceptable for SUST 395 course credit, provided the work required is relevant and substantial.

Students are required to find their own internship opportunities and to discuss them with their academic advisor, SUST professors, and/or the SUST program director. Check the [SUST at RU blog](#), Facebook page, and SUST Program Blackboard site for regularly posted information on potential internships.

Past examples of SUST internships include students working for organizations such as the Center for Neighborhood Technology, the Chicago Recycling Coalition, the Field Museum of Natural History, Growing Power, SCARCE (School & Community Assistance for Recycling & Composting Education), RU's Physical Resources department, etc. The Chicago area offers a wealth of potential internship opportunities!

Internship Supervisor, Student, and Faculty Responsibilities

Every SUST internship involves at least three people: the supervisor for whom the intern works, the student intern, and the sponsoring RU faculty member (who may or may not be the SUST director).

- The **supervisor** is, for example, the point person at an organization or company who will direct the intern's work, provide meaningful work/learning opportunities, schedule and keep track of the intern's work hours, evaluate his/her general performance during the internship, and communicate/consult with the sponsoring faculty member as needed.
- The **student intern** is responsible for fulfilling the designated duties of the internship, which in general requires 135 hours of work over the course of an academic semester (for 3 credit hours). This works out to approximately 8.5 hours per week for a 16-week internship period. Work hours may be flexible if part of the internship involves off-site work; certain weeks may be heavier than others, and the internship period should be at least 10 weeks in duration. In comparison to a regular college class, the intern needs to take higher responsibility for his/her work schedule, performance, and communication with the supervisor and faculty member. The student must also complete a periodic log of activities and compose a final paper/project reflecting on the internship experience.
- The **faculty sponsor** assesses the student's log and final paper/project, consults with the supervisor about the intern's job performance, and assigns a grade for the course (either pass/fall or a traditional letter grade per the student's choice).

Requirements and Academic Assignments

In addition to the hours worked for the internship, the student must submit the following to both the supervisor and the faculty sponsor:

- **Student contract:** This is a short form written in consultation with the supervisor and faculty sponsor that describes the internship, provides contact information, maps out a work schedule, and notes the type of log and final assignment the student will complete. It should be submitted to and approved by the faculty sponsor and SUST director no later than Week 2 of the semester.
- **Periodic log of activities and hours worked:** This can take various forms, such as weekly or biweekly emails to the supervisor and sponsor, a written journal, blog postings, etc. Students should determine with the faculty member at the start of the internship what format best suits them for the log. The writing may be informal, but the important thing is the log is submitted regularly and provides a detailed account of the intern's work, projects, etc. It may include reflections or questions, as well. The equivalent of 1 single-spaced page of text / two weeks would be a sufficient basis for a satisfactory log. Above all, the log should demonstrate that the student is fulfilling the minimum number of work hours toward the internship and provide some discussion of / reflection on the work being done.
- **Final project, paper, or public presentation:** The internship experience should culminate in a final project, paper, or presentation which reflects on the work done, connects it to the student's past and/or present educational experience, and/or analyzes the internship's impact on future goals, career directions, etc. If a formal written essay, it should be 7-10 double-spaced pages, not including the bibliography. It may also take the form of a slideshow presentation, a web-based project, and/or a public presentation. The chosen format for the final project should be determined near the outset of the internship by the student and faculty sponsor. This will be submitted to both the supervisor and the faculty sponsor, but graded by the latter.

Recent examples of student logs including these [SUST blog postings by Allison Breeding](#) in the summer of 2013. The biannual [SUST Student Symposium](#), which began in the Fall of 2013, has provided a venue for interns to present their experiences and research.

Grading Procedure and Policy

SUST 395 may be taken as a pass/fail course, in which a pass signifies at least "C" level work; or for a traditional letter grade (A, A-, B+, B, etc.). In order to receive credit for the class, a student must earn either a P or a C- grade (as with all other SUST courses). The internship supervisor assesses the work done with him/her and the organization/company and consults with the faculty sponsor. The faculty member assesses the quality of the student's log and final paper/project, and submits the grade to the RU registrar via the SUST program director.

In order for a student to receive a grade by the end of the semester, **all written assignments must be submitted no later than 10 days before the faculty grade submission deadline.** Students and faculty should consult the [RU academic calendar](#) for specific dates each semester.

Grading breakdown for SUST 395:

Internship work	60 points
Periodic log	20 points
Final project	20 points
Total	100 points

This 100-point scale translates to a letter grade as follows:

A	93-100 points
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	0-59%

Evaluation of Writing Assignments

The following is a summary of general criteria used to evaluate most kinds of writing assignments. Different assignments occasionally require special categories of consideration, naturally, and thus appropriate adjustments are made depending on the nature/depth/formality of the assignment. For example: text contributions to an online discussion forum are read much more loosely in terms of grammar and spelling than are formal pieces of writing, such as a critical essay.

"A" paper: Excellent

- Fulfills and successfully pushes beyond the minimum requirements of the assignment in terms of thoroughness and level of detail
- Defines its purpose/thesis very clearly and addresses a defined audience
- Exemplifies a high level of sophistication in terms of content and style (i.e., goes beyond obvious points, shows originality of thought, tackles a difficult subject, flows logically and coherently, uses mature sentence structure and diction, etc.)
- Demonstrates evidence of careful and thoughtful revision
- Displays excellent overall organization and nearly flawless mechanics
- Makes effective and judicious use of other sources (if required), and documents them correctly

- Is readable, clear, and free from needless ambiguity

"B" paper: Good

- Fulfills the minimum requirements of the assignment, and attempts (not always successfully) to go further in terms of development
- Defines its purpose/thesis adequately and addresses a particular audience (with perhaps an occasional lapse)
- Displays coherent organization, with room for possible adjustment
- Demonstrates some degree of thoughtful revision
- Employs reasonably sound writing mechanics
- Uses and documents sources competently
- Is reasonably free from logical flaws and ambiguity (though minor lapses may occur)

"C" paper: Fair

- Fulfills the bare minimum of the assignment; makes no attempt to go beyond what's easy or obvious
- Defines an audience, but does not address it adequately or consistently
- Defines a purpose, but in an unclear or confusing manner -- thesis is ineffective and unclear
- Presents material in a somewhat unorganized fashion
- Demonstrates little thoughtful revision -- changes are made only on the surface (e.g., spelling and grammar)
- Documents sources and/or uses visuals, but not effectively
- Lacks clarity -- the thought process is obscured and the prose is difficult to read
- Contains a number of stylistic and mechanical weaknesses (e.g., sentence structure may be simplistic and/or repetitive)

"D" paper: Needs a Major Overhaul

- Makes a minimal effort to fulfill the assignment, but fails to do an adequate job
- Lacks a clear purpose/focus
- Is seriously deficient in terms of audience awareness, organization, mechanics, documentation, etc.
- Is difficult to follow -- fundamental errors or lack of thoughtful development make reading a chore

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