

The Internship Report* (Eng 498/698)

Rationale

Because the student who does an internship receives credit from the university, graded credit determined by the technical writing faculty, there needs to be documentation in addition to the site supervisor's evaluation as a basis for that graded credit. Submitting an internship report not only provides the faculty with a document which qualifies the student for graded credit, it also provides the faculty with in-depth information about the profession they are responsible for preparing students to participate in. Furthermore, and of considerable importance, the internship report increases the student's responsibility by requiring the student intern to gather information and plan the report throughout the work experience. The student then has an opportunity to demonstrate maturity as a technical writer by presenting, analyzing, and evaluating his or her own work on the job.

Report Content and Format

The internship report comprises four parts, each involving a different kind of information and a different mode of written discourse: (1) introduction, (2) narrative, (3) analysis and evaluation, and (4) appendix.

Introduction

The introduction explains the setting where the work was accomplished and gives a sense of how the intern's job related to the entire work of the hiring organization. This section lends itself to the inverted pyramid organization, moving from general information about the entire organization to a specific description of the intern's day-to-day environment. The student can obtain general information about the organization from public relations brochures, interviews, and company documents such as annual reports. In addition to including information about the company's name, location, products or services, size, financial worth, and so forth, this section of the report should also describe the intern's individual role as well as specific schedule within the organization. What type of work was done, when, and how did the intern fit into the overall organizational structure; a flow chart or hierarchy diagram would be appropriate here.

This section should conclude with attention to exactly what the intern did, for whom, and what types as well as levels of skill were required.

Narrative

The narrative section gives a detailed account of the day-to-day activities of the workplace. This section is descriptive and factual, saving evaluation and analysis for the subsequent section. The plan of organization will vary, depending on the situation. It may be chronological, describing what the student did in the order it was done. Or it could be organized by skill group, describing, for example, the editing jobs, then the writing jobs, and finally the production jobs. Or it could be by order of importance, beginning with the lower level tasks and working toward the more challenging and larger projects.

* These guidelines for the internship report are adapted from an article by J. Corey and M. Killingsworth, "The Internship Report," in *The Technical Writing Teacher*, Spring 1987, pp. 133-141.

One thing that is required to complete this section is a log or journal to be kept by the intern from the very beginning of the internship. This log will provide an invaluable record for the student when it comes time to summarize the whole experience.

Analysis and Evaluation

The analysis and evaluation section enables the student to discuss and criticize the actual writing produced on the job. The previous sections are valuable as a source of information for the readers of the internship report. But this section is probably the most valuable for the intern him or herself because it calls on the student to think about and articulate what has been learned during the internship.

Here the student gets a chance to criticize the organization as a whole and to evaluate its treatment of him or her, as well as other employees. The student also has the opportunity to evaluate his or her own overall performance as well as the quality of particular technical writing documents produced.

This section offers a unique chance to reflect on professional identity, management, and practice in the workplace, as well as the nature and quality of technical documents.

Appendix

The appendix allows the student to include samples of written work as well as letters of evaluation, pertinent correspondence, and other documents of interest. The problem with completing this section usually turns out to be that students have either too much or not enough to include. Only material directly referred to in other sections of the report should be included; all writing samples and other documents included must be identified as well as have their significance explained.

The student should be selective, including the most pertinent and best samples of his or her work.

Additional Sections

In a lengthy report, one which includes all of these sections, each developed at some length, additional elements such as a cover page, title page, table of contents, and abstract would be appropriate. Indexes, summaries, and resumes might also be included. The internship report content and format should be adjusted to the internship itself. Some internships might not have been extensive or varied enough to provide material for all of the sections described above.

Conclusion

The internship is a key element in the technical writing student's professional preparation. And the internship report is a key element in the internship experience. It is through writing the report that the maturity and professional experience the student gained as an intern becomes fully realized. It is through the report that the student exercises his or her critical and analytical faculties and demonstrates newly found skill and identity as a professional communicator.