**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Are interns held to similar standards as employees? For example, on-time to work and notice of absences, etc.?**

Yes, all interns will be held to the same standards as regular employees. They will be expected to report to work on time and to provide notice of any absences. If the intern does not adhere to the standards, discussions should be held with the intern by the supervisor/mentor. This is a learning opportunity for many students who may be new to the workforce and completing their first internship experience with Henrico County.

**Can the tasks of the intern change during the process if we identify their skills could be better used on a different project?**

Yes, tasks can change during the internship, but a discussion needs to be held with the intern and discussed with HR by contacting the Internship Coordinator, Debbie Lumpkin at lum@henrico.us or 501-7206. Learning Plans will need to be updated. Any changes will also need to be reviewed for any impact on for-credit internships.

**Is the intern matched to a specific supervisor/mentor? Can this person change during their internship?**

The intern’s supervisor/mentor should remain the same during the entire period of the internship.  Exceptions can be made depending on why the supervisor will need to change but for the best learning experience, it is best to have the same supervisor.  Departments will match the supervisor/mentor to the interns, and it will be up to the department to decide who will work with each intern.  There can be developmental opportunities for non-supervisors to supervise/mentor the interns, so this is an option if you have any employees who have expressed interest in gaining supervisory experience.  However, for timecards and any other system-related tasks, there needs to be a supervisor to generate/approve items.

**What is expected from the supervisor/department to help benefit the intern? For example, is the department to write a paper on the work done to give the student credit? How much time from a supervisory standpoint should be dedicated to the intern?**

The primary task that departments will need to complete for each intern is to discuss and agree on specific learning goals for the intern during their internship and then to hold regular meetings with the intern.  There is no need to write any type of paper from the HR perspective.  However, if you do have for-credit interns, you would have to complete any required paperwork from their school.  Usually this is a form or two plus regularly scheduled meetings.  For all interns, HR will send a mid-term evaluation to the intern as well as supervisor and then a final evaluation at the end of the internship.

 **How are timecards handled?**

Your department should follow the regular processes you currently use for reporting time. Paid interns cannot work more than 29 hours per week. Interns are not paid for holidays.

Academic Credit/Unpaid Interns do not create timecards in Oracle. The supervisor and student should develop a tracking method for recording the hours (if the learning institution does not provide this) that the student works. At the end of the internship this record can be sent to the Internship Program Coordinator to include in the intern’s employment record.

**What are the expectations from the department at the completion of the internship? Will the intern be reviewed like a performance appraisal?**

Most students have not had any type of formal review, and this is their first exposure to the process. It is a great tool and resource for them to have as a part of their portfolio. There will be an evaluation which is included in the department guide for Interns as well as the Internship Manual provided to the students. It is not a requirement, but it is encouraged, and the intern may request this. This is an opportunity to document challenges during the internship that the intern has overcome or improved as well as note what they are already proficient and excelling. While you might not be able to speak to all the competencies in depth due to their assignments and time within your department but do your best!

**What happens if there is a performance problem with the intern?**

The internship provides the student opportunities to learn to deal with problems which arise from work duties and interpersonal relationships. If a situation or questions arise regarding the student’s role or responsibilities, the intern is encouraged to discuss concerns with their supervisor. If the intern and supervisor are unable to reach an understanding acceptable to both parties, please contact the Internship Program Coordinator.

**Are there exit interviews planned by HR so that the intern can offer insight on what went well and what didn’t to help the department plan better for the future? Should this be done by the department? Or what about monthly reviews to ensure the intern is receiving the challenge and knowledge they anticipated?**

* Monthly reviews/meetings are recommended for each intern.
* Evaluations will be incorporated into the mid-point and final evaluations that will be sent by HR for the student to evaluate their experience.
* Short weekly or bi-weekly meetings are recommended between the intern & supervisor to see how things are going and if there are any issues.
* HR will also be recommending to interns that they keep a journal of their internship learning experiences.  A journal is valuable for the intern as it can be used in conjunction with the Learning Plan as a basis for a discussion but only the Learning Plan is mandatory at this time.

**What are the primary differences between a high school and a college intern as far as work expectations? Are they similar? What suggestions can you offer to help me identify which would best meet my needs?**

The work expectations will be similar between both high school and college interns. The primary reason for the internships will be career exploration and some skill development. The main differences between a high school intern and a college intern are the age and experience of the student. Many high school students may not have worked before or have some experience babysitting, tutoring, volunteering or in retail or food service capacity and this is their first internship experience.

We have a partnership with Henrico County Public School’s Career and Technical Education Program (CTE), students who are in specific programs that may or may not include going to college after the completion of high school.  For example, students in their HVAC program often are going directly to work within the HVAC industry after graduating from high school.  Their skills (and learning goals) will be very specific to HVAC tasks.  For the CTE High Tech Academy, many of these students may be planning to go into engineering and IT positions and internships that expose them to these professions are beneficial.

 For the pilot internship program in summer 2012, the Water Reclamation Facility hired students who attended the High-Tech Academy. Students in this program typically have interest in becoming an Engineer and have goals to attend college. Each student indicated that seeing the nuts and bolts of a water treatment facility was valuable to their academic goals.  If you are interested in considering working with a high school intern from the CTE program and have questions, please let us know.

For college interns who are a freshman or sophomore, many may be like the high school interns in the fact that they are seeking opportunities for career exploration with some skill development.  For junior/seniors in college or graduate students, the internships should be more task-focused specific to their profession.  For example, an intern who is in a mechanical engineering program will want to perform some type of work associated with mechanical engineering.  We will help you with identifying what will be the best students to target based on the work you have a need for interns to perform.

**Is there a difference in tasks given to an intern depending based on if they are paid or if they are earning academic credit (unpaid)? More specifically, if they are working for credit, does that work need to meet more specific goals to qualify? For example, if the intern is studying computer technology for school does the project need to fall within a specific realm of programming, etc., or would performing data entry qualify? Does the school advisor approve the work?**

There should be no differences in tasks given to a paid or for and academic credit (unpaid) intern. Both internships should focus on their academic program and learning goals.

The student earning academic credit (unpaid) may have specific goals that the student needs to accomplish during the internship which are focused primarily to their academic program.  There may be differences between these requirements from school to school but expect most will require the supervisor to work directly with the intern and require the supervisor and student to complete additional paperwork for the school advisor to approve prior to the start of the internship.

**What is a Learning Plan?**

When students apply for the internship positions, it is requested that they provide a cover letter with why they are interested in the specific internship and then to provide at least three learning goals for their internship.

For students who are “hired” as interns, these documents will become the foundation of putting together a Learning Plan between the intern and supervisor.

 A Learning Plan is incorporated into our Internship Program Guide for students and is provided to them on their first day and they are encouraged to discuss and develop this with their supervisor. Departments should be flexible and if there is an opportunity for an intern to learn something valuable that they did not identify on their Learning Plan, it can be incorporated into the Plan later.

**Are Interns required to take any compliance training?**

Yes, on-line compliance training is required for all interns if the department assigns the intern computer access. At some point during their internship, the intern will receive an email regarding computer usage/compliance training from our IT Department. The intern is required to complete the training with the instructions IT will supply within the timeframe designated.

**What are the criteria for an intern to drive a county vehicle?**

* Students must be **18 years old** to drive a county vehicle with an **acceptable record**.
* A **DMV release** form needs to be completed and the student will be required to complete the **County’s Driving Course prior to driving a county car.**
* The departments should **work directly with the office or Emergency Management and Workplace Safety to coordinate the training**. For the training, the intern will receive pay (if the student is a paid) or hours credit for the length of training towards the student’s hours requirement (if the student is in an internship that is for academic credit).

**Can I keep my intern beyond the semester in which they were hired?**

Yes, a paid intern can have their internship extended. Contact the Internship Program Coordinator for approval once the guidelines below have been determined:

* Has the performance of the student been acceptable?
* Will the intern still be a student?
* Does the intern have the interest and availability to continue?
* Does the department have a need to keep the intern to complete a current or new project?
* What will the intern be working on and what knowledge will the intern gain out of having the internship extended?
* Does the department have funds available within the budget to continue paying the intern?

Internships for academic credit must follow the student’s program guidelines and if an extension is necessary for them to achieve their hours, the supervisor will work with the student to accomplish. However, the student will have to seek the necessary approval from their Program chair/Advisor and complete the school process to do such.

Note: In some cases of extensions for either paid or unpaid/academic credit internships may require the Internship Coordinator to seek approval of Director of HR.

To keep an intern who is no longer a student or who has graduated, they will need to be reclassified from an intern into another hourly temporary position or emergency hire. Contact the Internship Program Coordinator to learn more about this process.

**What are the work breaks and lunch requirements for Interns?**

Federal law does not require lunch or coffee breaks. However, when employers do offer short breaks (usually lasting about 5 to 20 minutes), federal law considers the breaks as compensable work hours that would be included in the sum of hours worked during the workweek and considered in determining if overtime was worked. Unauthorized extensions of authorized work breaks need not be counted as hours worked when the employer has expressly and unambiguously communicated to the employee that the authorized break may only last for a specific length of time, that any extension of the break is contrary to the employer's rules, and any extension of the break will be punished.

Meal periods (typically lasting at least 30 minutes), serve a different purpose than coffee or snack breaks and, thus, are not work time and are not compensable.

Source: <https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/workhours/breaks>

**Can My Intern get a County ID Badge?**

Yes. An Intern having an ID badge helps them feel a part of the team and it is especially helpful if they need access in and out of the different areas of the building or to different offices.

Fall and Spring Interns will have their photo taken by the Internship Program Coordinator and it will be sent to Security Services and hiring manager/supervisor. The card cannot be issued prior to the start date and the card will not be issued without department staff sending Security Services an Access Request form. Pick up of the badge should be worked out between the department with Security Services.

Note: Summer interns will have an ID badge issued at their Orientation.