



CLAREMONT  
SCHOOL OF  
THEOLOGY



Internship Supervisor Handbook  
Master of Arts Programs

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**Supervisor Handbook  
Master of Arts Student Internships**

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# **Supervisor Handbook**

## **Master of Arts Student Internship Program**

### **Claremont School of Theology**

#### **Introduction**

Thank you so much for your willingness to supervise a Claremont School of Theology student intern! Internships require partnership between the school and organizations in the community, with the shared goal of preparing people well for service and leadership. The School sends interns out expecting that they will make real contribution to the work of an agency or other organization. At the same time, we know that guiding a person in such a learning process takes time and commitment on your part. We value your partnership highly – this program would in no way be possible without you.

Internships are arranged individually, matching organizational student interests and capacities with appropriate internship settings. Master of Arts students may do internships in a variety of settings including social service, justice and advocacy, non-profit management, health services, and campus ministry. Religious, interreligious, and secular sites are possible. For most MA students the internship is an elective, usually chosen to strengthen their vocational knowledge and skills. In two MA programs an internship is required.

Supervisors and students work out an internship job description based on the needs in the setting and the opportunities for students to serve these needs and to learn through this service. Since this is a graduate-level program, responsibilities must be appropriate to this level of education.

During the semester(s) that students are placed in an internship they also participate in a weekly seminar or a directed study supervised by one of our faculty members. The seminar or directed study includes some reading and writing assignments, but the primary “textbooks” are the students’ internship experiences. The seminar process is intended to foster self-awareness, relational and contextual competence, and depth of theological reflection. The model is reflective practice: regularly observing and thinking about one’s work and experience in order to learn from successes and mistakes.

The student intern handbook is also available to you on the school’s website (under Academic Resources at [www.cst.edu](http://www.cst.edu)). Reading this will give you a more complete picture of the roles and responsibilities of the partners in the field education program.

Feel free to contact the field education director at Claremont School of Theology with any questions, concerns, or problems that may arise.

## The Supervisor's Role and Responsibilities

The onsite supervisor is key to the whole internship process. Below is a summary of the supervisor's responsibilities. Additional detail follows this summary.

1. Become familiar with the program standards and expectations.
2. Work with the intern to develop a **mutually agreed-upon role**, involving 8-10 hours per week. The intern's work should provide broad exposure to the various dimensions of ministry plus more focused responsibilities and/or projects.
3. Guide the student in writing a **learning/serving agreement**, which is a specific plan and learning outcomes for the internship.
4. Early in the year or semester, provide **hospitality and orientation** for the intern. Interpret the intern's role and responsibilities others as needed.
5. Meet weekly for **reflection and consultation** with the intern.
6. Provide a **written assessment** at the end of each semester.

## Dates and Responsibilities – for a 2-semester internship

### September

- Work with the student on his/her learning/serving agreement.
- Provide hospitality and orientation to the student

### October

- The seminar instructor or another faculty person will check in with you by phone or email, to ask you how things are going and address any concerns you might have.

### November

- An online workshop on supervision will be scheduled for early November. The date will be provided in August.

### December

- Written assessments of the intern are due in mid-December. Please talk to your intern about this before you send it in – the purpose is the student's growth and learning. Students also write self-assessments which include reflection on their supervisors' feedback.

### January

- Interns should have a 2-week break sometime in late December or early January. Specific dates are flexible depending on the situation and needs.
- Interns are asked to update their learning/serving agreements at the beginning of the spring semester (late January).

### March

- The seminar instructor or another faculty person will check in with you by phone or email.

### April/May

- Written assessments are due in early May. Again this semester, please discuss your assessment with your student. Students will write a final self- assessment, including their reflections on your feedback.

## **Dates and Responsibilities – for a spring semester-only internship**

### **January**

- Work with the student on his/her Learning/Serving Agreement.
- Provide hospitality and orientation to the student and the congregation

### **March**

- The seminar instructor will check in with you by phone or email, to ask you how things are going and address any concerns you might have.
- Additional resources and on supervision will be provided.

### **May**

- Written assessments of the intern are due in early May. Please talk to your intern about this before you send it in – the purpose is the student’s growth and learning. Students also write self-assessments that include reflection on their supervisors’ feedback.
- Work with others to offer a closure and farewell process for the intern. In every setting some sort of goodbye is important.

## **Background Checks, Etc.**

Please follow whatever procedures and policies you have in place to insure the safety and well-being of staff, volunteers, and all in the congregation or organization. The school does not do background checks on students doing internships. The school’s curriculum does include instruction about boundaries and ethical issues in relationships, as well as mandatory reporting responsibilities of religious workers.

## **Offering Welcome and Hospitality**

As the internship begins, work with others as appropriate to help the intern enter the life of the organization. Introduce the intern in formal and informal ways. Give the intern a title, a place to work, a phone and/or computer if needed, and any needed supplies or equipment.

## **The Intern’s Role, Professional Expectations**

It is important for everyone to understand that the intern is a student who is there to learn and grow. The intern’s role and responsibilities should make a genuine contribution to the organization’s work, and these responsibilities should be assigned and interpreted as part of the learning process. Sometimes organizations expect a student intern to function fully as a staff member and may be frustrated or confused when their expectations are not met. The supervisor should interpret this this distinctive role.

The internship should be a broad-based experience that introduces a student to the various dimensions of the placement setting. Often the first part of the internship includes time that the student is observing and perhaps “shadowing” the supervisor. But the intern also needs to be

actively involved in the organization's tasks and relationships, with specific responsibilities to fulfill. The particulars of an intern's job description will vary with the context and the student's skills and interests. Since this is a graduate program, responsibilities should be appropriate to that educational level.

It is important to specify and agree on weekly schedule expectations, and participation in events outside regularly scheduled internship hours. On school holidays, including the winter break, students are not required by the school to be present at their internship sites, but many continue their full internship involvement during these times. Be sure to discuss expectations with your intern. Students doing a 2-semester internship should be given a two-week break sometime between mid-December and mid-January.

Especially early in the year, it is often helpful for students to accompany you to meetings and other activities as appropriate. This exercise of shadowing is something students usually find valuable, even if they have no specific responsibilities. Take advantage of opportunities as they arise. The intern's shadowing experiences are enhanced if you discuss them during your weekly reflection session. Most students need a combination of nuts and bolts instruction and reflection about why things are done as they are and implications of different options.

Be clear in advance about professional behaviors you expect, and review these periodically as needed. For example, students may need to be told to arrive early for important events. They may also need guidance on appropriate attire, how to be reimbursed for expenses, etc. It is better to be very clear and direct about these issues in advance. You also need to discuss when professional standards are not being met, and avoid the temptation to look the other way. Sometimes these standards are invisible to students and must be made explicit. Support the intern in discovering the effect of his/her behavior, and encourage reflection on choices and changes. Additionally, students should be instructed how to handle requests which fall outside of their area of expertise or responsibility.

### **Developing the Learning/Serving Agreement**

The learning-serving agreement is the student's contract and learning outcomes statement for the internship. The form is included at the end of this handbook and is also provided on the CST website. Students are required to complete it during September, with your assistance. Seminar instructors will work extensively with students during the first weeks of school on how to develop their outcomes. The process of developing this agreement should be a top priority during the first weeks of the internship.

Research and experience tell us that adults learn best when they can direct their own learning outcomes and interests. This means they learn best when given choices, when they structure their own outcomes, and when they decide on topics for focus. Second career learners must find ways to appropriately bring prior professional formation and skills into a whole new field. First career learners also want to bring existing strengths into balance with emerging skills.

In accordance with accreditation requirements, CST has moved away from language about goals to talk instead about outcomes. An outcome in this sense is a description of what will have been accomplished by the end of a certain experience or period of time. It is also language of

expected results – what students will know, what they will be able to do, and who they will be in terms of attitudes and values.

The overall outcomes for the MA internship program are that by the end of the internship experience students will be able to:

1. Utilize academic knowledge in an applied setting.
2. Act with competence across religious and/or cultural boundaries.
3. Articulate the connections between their academic work and the broader community.
4. Demonstrate personal integrity in service and leadership activity.

These outcomes relate to the whole experience – internship and seminar together. All participants in the program – student interns, site supervisors, and faculty – work together so that students achieve these learning outcomes. In addition to the overall outcomes listed above, you will develop particular learning outcomes based on the needs and characteristics of your setting and also your own interests, skills, and vocational directions.

The Learning/Serving Agreement Form is included at the end of this handbook and is also provided on the CST website. The completed form will be due early in the semester, along with a 1-2 page description of the student's work plan and learning outcomes.

The learning/serving agreement students submit must include the completed form with contact information and signatures, plus a 1-2 page narrative describing:

1. The student's internship responsibilities – week by week and over the course of the semester(s).
2. The most important 3-4 outcomes the intern wants to achieve through this service, with a description of how they will be accomplished. Each outcome should relate to one or more of the MA internship outcomes listed above.
3. For each outcome, a description of the actions that will be taken in order to accomplish it.

The outcomes should be particular to the person and the context, more focused than the overall learning outcomes for MA internships. The specific outcomes should reflect the most important priorities for service and learning through the internship experience.

Along with observation and the kinds of activities that orient and give a broad familiarity with the organization, the intern should have responsibility for one or several projects. The projects should be chosen for relevance and importance to both to the student's interests and the organization's work. The internship plan and learning outcomes should have both breadth and depth.

In summary, all outcomes should be:

- Important and relevant to the needs in the setting.
- Important and relevant to the student.
- Challenging and also achievable in your context and with the time available.
- Specific and measurable enough that you and others will be able to recognize when they are achieved.
- Stated with strategies or methods for accomplishing them.

For a two-semester internship there will be an opportunity to update the agreement at the beginning of the second semester. Some tasks and outcomes may have been achieved by then; others might need modification. New priorities may have emerged.

## **The Supervision Relationship and Weekly Reflection Meetings**

Internship supervision involves holding the intern accountable while supporting his or her learning and development. Both dimensions – support and accountability – are important and needed. Support without accountability can be dishonest, and accountability without support unfair. The art of balancing these two roles is multidimensional. You offer more than expertise about the important how-to aspects of the intern’s work. You also set an appropriate tone in the supervision relationship so that the student can learn and participate fully. Expect the intern to gradually grow comfortable enough to try things and reflect helpfully.

Your first and most substantial efforts should be to establish a trust relationship with the student. Establishing and keeping a weekly meeting time is the single most important factor in developing trust in the intern-mentor relationship. We recognize that this is a significant time commitment on your part, and appreciate your willingness to make it a priority.

- **Schedule a weekly hour of uninterrupted one-to-one time for your supervision meetings.** Talk about how you will communicate with each other if one of you needs to miss, and how the meeting time would be re-scheduled. If an intern misses more than one session and does not communicate to your satisfaction about it, this should be a topic of discussion between you. Although students are busy and know you are too, many students feel cheated if a supervisor cancels more than one session.
- **Decide together on a format you will use for your meetings.** Sometimes the intern will bring topics for discussion, or a particular situation to examine. Another choice is to make a list of topics to cover and go through them week by week.
- **Encourage reflective connections between theory and practice.** The model is reflective practice: regularly observing and thinking about one’s work and experience in order to learn from successes and mistakes. This is a priority for all internships. Talking about particular events and situations is often the best way to do this. Sometimes students bring case-type situations they want to explore, or supervisors may do this. You are not expected to be the answer-person but the one who asks questions and listens.
- **Discuss particular topics relevant to the context.** If you decide to structure your meetings around particular topics, here are some suggestions. Many of these are covered in the internship seminar or in other seminary classes. Students benefit from hearing a practitioner’s take on these too.
  - History of the organization
  - Mission, values, and vision – and how they developed
  - Organizational structure

Governance and management  
Context of the organization  
Most important current challenges and opportunities  
Ethical responsibilities  
Legal responsibilities, including mandatory reporting if applicable  
Conceptual/theological underpinnings of the organization  
How planning and evaluation are done  
Important relationships with other organizations and people  
Stakeholders in the community  
Financial planning, budgeting, and management  
Leadership development  
Communication  
Organizational culture

### **If You Encounter Difficulty with your Student Intern**

If a problem arises, it is important to address the situation right away. Among the options for addressing the situation are the following:

- Begin with a forthright conversation with the student, including these steps:
  - Describe your expectation that is not being met.
  - Describe what the student is doing that concerns you, including the effect his or her behavior has on you and/or others.
  - Describe what you want the student to do differently.
  - Ask for the student's perceptions and response.
  - Together agree on a plan for change.
- If you are still encountering difficulties, you should call the director of field education at the earliest possibility. A supportive phone conversation with the director may give you enough resources to continue working creatively with the situation.
- You may want to schedule regular check-in times with the director for ongoing consultation.
- A three-way conversation, structured and led by the director, and also including you and the student, may help to bring to the surface some of the issues and suggest possibilities for change.

**Discernment Status:** The field education director may declare the placement in discernment status. The purpose of discernment status is to foster frequent, supportive conversations and reflections on issues that have become difficult for the teaching placement to address. The director's involvement during a time of discernment status helps foster healthy communication within the teaching placement to best foster productive relationships. On occasion, the discernment process may also help determine that a learning relationship needs to be terminated

early. Early termination may only occur upon notification of all signatories to the learning/serving agreement.

Circumstances which could lead to a declaration of discernment status include non-performance of duties by the student or the supervisor, the onset of illness, unprofessional attitudes which do not improve with initial discussions, or ethical misbehavior by a student, supervisor, or others in the setting.

Discernment status may be requested by the student, the supervisor, the chair of the teaching placement committee, or by the director of field education. When the director has determined that discernment status is appropriate, the director first informs the supervisor, then the chair of the teaching placement committee, the intern, and the academic dean of Claremont School of Theology that a discernment time, of specific duration, has been entered. The director informs, in writing, all parties of the beginning and end of a discernment status, the reasons for such status, and the expected activities during the status. Similarly, the director informs all parties of the resolution of the discernment status.

### **The Assessment Process**

During the internship year, students are involved in several processes of assessment. Interns complete written self-assessments at the end of each semester. The teaching placement committee also completes a written report each semester and discusses it with the intern. The supervisor's assessment is an essential part of this larger picture, providing feedback to the intern for his or her own growth and learning. Assessment from others helps the intern develop self-awareness and the capacity to be self-correcting – essential competencies for ministry.

Your written assessments are due at Claremont School of Theology in December and May. Assessment of the intern's work should be based on the mutually agreed-upon outcomes identified in the learning/serving agreement. Both fall and spring semester assessment should be discussed with the student before they are sent to the school.

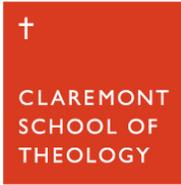
Keep in mind that both the December and May assessments are intended to further the intern's growth and development in ministry. They are not final or conclusive statements about the person's skills and potential for ministry. The assessment letters in December and May will follow the same basic format, which is given at the end of this handbook.

In addition, at the end of the year you may be asked to fill out a form assessing the intern's work related to the overall learning outcomes of the Master of Arts program at Claremont School of Theology. This information will be used for the school's overall assessment of the degree program.

## **Questions or Concerns?**

At any time during the year, please feel free to contact the field education director if you have a question or concern. And thank you again for your participation!

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**Master of Arts Internships**  
**Learning/Serving Agreement &**  
**Student Learning Outcomes**

**Turn in copies in to the intern’s seminar instructor or directed study professor and the field education office. Intern and supervisor keep copies.**

**Attach a 1-2 page narrative describing:**

1. Your internship responsibilities – what you will be doing week by week and over the course of the semester(s).
2. The most important 3-4 outcomes you want to achieve through these activities. At least one outcome should be in each of the following areas:
  - a. Skill development
  - b. Personal development– spiritual, physical, emotional, and/or moral
  - c. Integrative reflection – exploring connections between internship experiences and classes, theological themes, and/or vocation.

For each outcome, describe the actions you will take in order to accomplish it.

<b>Student Intern’s Name:</b>
<b>Placement site:</b>
<b>Supervisor’s name:</b>
<b>Supervisor’s email:</b>

**Student Intern’s Responsibilities:**

- To devote 8-10 regular hours per week to the placement site.
- To meet weekly with the supervisor for reflection and monthly with the Teaching Placement Committee (if applicable).
- To communicate regularly with the supervising mentor about the schedule, activities and reflections on ministry/faith development and personal/professional growth.
- To meet regularly with the supervising mentor for reflection on the internship experience, and to raise questions and concerns.
- To maintain the highest ethical standards during the internship.

\_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

**Supervisor’s Responsibilities:**

- To meet weekly with the student intern.
- To support the intern’s learning process, and follow the handbook guidelines for supervision and mentoring.
- To provide feedback and evaluations on both the intern’s strengths and growing edges to enhance the intern’s learning process.
- To establish the Teaching Placement Committee as appropriate, and offer support as needed.
- To communicate with the Field Education Office as requested or if there are concerns or questions.
- To comply with all expectations listed below under Additional Requirements.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervising Mentor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Additional Requirements**

1. The ministry site is responsible for orienting the student to the ministry site, including an explanation of any potential health or safety risks.
2. The ministry site is responsible for complying with all federal and state laws, including any applicable tax and labor laws related to the student’s ministry site experience.
3. The ministry site and the school will comply with federal laws and regulations regarding non-discrimination.
4. The student is fulfilling specific requirements for field experience as part of a degree requirement. The student does not thereby become an employee or agent of the school by virtue of his or her field experience.
5. The supervisor, on behalf of the supervising agency, assumes liability for the student when s/he is acting within the scope of his/her responsibilities as agreed upon.
6. The school is not responsible for providing the student’s transportation to and from the ministry site, or for providing the student’s transportation for any of the student’s duties during the student’s ministry site experience.
7. The ministry site will keep confidential any student evaluations and other records of the student, and disclose such records only to school and other officials who have a legitimate need to know consistent with their official responsibilities.

Questions? Contact Alma Johnson-Hawkins, Director of Field Education, 909-447-2534, [ajohnson-hawkins@cst.edu](mailto:ajohnson-hawkins@cst.edu)