Internships for undergraduates in the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Sciences

FWCS undergraduates must complete two internship courses before graduation: the Exploratory Internship for 1 credit, and the Intensive Internship for 3 credits:

1) 40-hour exploratory internship -
   • Goal is to introduce student to an off-campus, professional setting and provide real-world learning opportunity within their career path.
   • Ex. Weekend job shadow, data analysis, volunteering, attending a professional conference

2) 200-hour Intensive Internship -
   • Goal is to set students up well for their first jobs post-graduation, both by gaining skills relevant to their own career path, and by building contacts with relevant employers.
   • Should be completed in junior or early senior year
   • Can be completed part-time over multiple terms, as needed
   • Ex. seasonal field work, remote project work, internship with a conservation non-profit, wildlife rehabilitation apprentice, international internship...you name it and students have done it.

A good Intensive Internship does the following:
   • Provides 200 hours of work within an employer-employee relationship structure, in which students have tangible deliverables, expectations, and a timeline for completion
   • Sets students up with networking opportunities and job skills within their career path
   • Offers a supervisor that provides mentorship, opportunities for feedback and check-in’s
   • Provides funding, or alternatively, flexible schedules + professional development + other benefits.
   • **Most importantly, achieves the mission of bringing the student closer to their desired post-graduation career.

If you have further questions, please review the FWCS Internships webpage and the detailed FAQs starting on the following page. The FWCS Internship Coordinator at FW.internship@oregonstate.edu is available for further inquiries and internship approval.
FWCS Internships - Frequently Asked Questions
Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Sciences

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Section I. Internship Coordination

What is the role of the Internship Coordinator?
The Internship Coordinator’s role is to guide students through the process of choosing appropriate career development opportunities to meet their goals including internships, volunteer activities, jobs, research experiences and networking; to teach career skills in FW 209 Career Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences; and to approve internships that meet your career goals and facilitate learning during the internship. The Internship Coordinator is available to support students needing additional support in finding an internship; however, it is the student’s responsibility to research and apply for internships.

Should I get in touch with my Academic Advisor if I have questions about internships?
No; first visit our Internships webpage and read all material there. Then read this FAQ guide. If you still have questions after that, please contact the Internship Coordinator (fw.internship@oregonstate.edu). Be sure to include all pertinent background information related to your questions.

Section II. FW 209 Career Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences

What is FW 209 Career Skills in Fisheries & Wildlife Sciences?
FW 209 is a required, one-credit course and part of the professional series offered to Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Sciences majors. The series also includes FW 107 Orientation to Fisheries and Wildlife and FW 307 Specialization Development. FW 209 is a precursor for internships and is taught by the Internship Coordinator. The course helps students identify local organizations that may offer internships that align with their academic and professional interests, and time/geographic constraints. It also helps students prepare internship and job application materials specific to the fisheries and wildlife field. The Internship Coordinator works individually with each student in the course to explore current opportunities in their geographic and interest areas, refine their résumé and cover letter to show transferable skills, practice interviewing, and build skills to network locally.

When should I take FW 209?
Plan carefully with your advisor to ensure you take FW 209 and FW 307 at the right times. Generally, students take FW 209 mid-way through their degree, and closely before you start searching for internships. After completing FW 209, you may take FW 307.

You will need your advisor’s approval to register for FW 209. In granting approval, advisors will ensure that you have completed the enforced prerequisite, FW 107, and also that you are far along enough in your degree. Before taking FW 209, ideally you should have completed FW 251 Principles of Fish and
Wildlife Conservation and the chemistry series, and at least started the biology series. Advisors use these approval guidelines to ensure that students don’t take FW 209 too far in advance, as the course is intended to be taken just before the student starts applying for their intensive internship.

**What if I find an internship prior to taking FW 209?**

If an internship opportunity arises beforehand before you can take FW 209, email the Internship Coordinator at fw.internship@oregonstate.edu for internship approval. Include the following in your email request:

- the internship position description, including your position duties and employer name;
- the position length, including start/end date, & hrs/week,
- total hrs you expect to complete by the end date,
- an explanation of how this fits into your career goals

**Section III. What kind of internships are accepted for the FWCS Internship Requirement?**

**General Rule for internship approvals**

The FWCS Internships program is adaptive to students’ individual career goals and needs. The FWCS Internship Coordinator will generally approve a student’s proposed internship if it meets the following three criteria:

1. The internship is within the fisheries, wildlife, and conservation sciences fields;
2. The internship meet the hourly requirement of at least 40 hours (for exploratory) or 200 hours (for intensive)
3. The internship will advance the student towards their desired career goals.

Please see the FWCS Internships page for more information on Internship requirements and examples of what students do for their internships.

**Can an unpaid internship be approved?**

Yes. While we encourage students to seek paid opportunities, unpaid internships are still accepted. Please note that internships designed to accommodate a student’s schedule will generally be unpaid, whereas internships that accommodate an employer’s schedule will generally be paid. We suggest applying early and often for internship opportunities that interest you – this gives you time to prioritize internships that are paid and more competitive.

**Can I use past experience for my internship requirement?**

In general, past experience cannot be used to fulfill an internship requirement. However, if you have significant past experience -- for example, 3+ years of recent experience with a FW employer -- you should contact the Internship Coordinator (fw.internship@oregonstate.edu) to discuss this possibility. In that email, please include your updated resume with total hours completed for each FW-related experience, and a description of your professional goals.

**Are remote/virtual internships accepted?**

Yes.
What if I am currently volunteering (or will be soon) in a FWCS-related field?
If you expect to complete 40 or 200 hours in this volunteer position, email the Internship Coordinator and share details on:

- Your volunteer duties & employer name;
- Position length, how many hours you’ve volunteered so far (and over what time period), and how many hours you expect to complete by the end date;
- An explanation of how this fits into your career goals

Do I need to have the title of ‘Intern’ for my position to be approved?
No. Please see the General Rule for internship approvals. Your position duties, rather than title, are considered in internship approval. For example, your position may be called a ‘volunteer’ position rather than an ‘Intern’ position. While these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, in practice, typically volunteering indicates that you could volunteer for just a few hours, with little to no training, orientation, or longer-term deliverables, whereas interning indicates a longer time commitment, a commitment from a supervisor or mentor who will oversee your duties and/or receive your deliverables, and higher-level duties which will require some training.

Can I do more than one Internship?
Yes, but you may only want to pay for the one (exploratory) or three (intensive) credit course that is required. However, if you want to earn credits for completing a second internship, read below and email the Internship Coordinator to describe your proposed plan.

A student may receive a maximum of 8 credits of FW 410 by completing an additional FW 410 intensive and/or exploratory internship. The additional domestic FW 410 internship can apply to Specialization if the following are true: 1) the student has completed their first FW410 domestic exploratory or intensive internship; 2) the additional exploratory or intensive internship is significantly different from the first completed internship (e.g., different conference, project, employer, or skillset gained); 3) the student presents a strong case as to why more internship credits are needed, and; 4) it has been approved by the Internship Coordinator.

Please note that per Specialization Guidelines, a maximum of 12 credit hours, in any combination, of FW 401 (research) and FW 410 Internship (international or domestic), or as part of an Oregon State Study Abroad program may apply.

How does internship relate to FW 401 Research Credit?
If a student has already completed their internship requirements AND is continuing to engage in research with an OSU faculty, they have the option to enroll in FW 401 Research Credit and apply these credits to their Specialization. Please note that research credits are optional, and students may engage in research without registering for these credits. Please read details on the FWCS Internships webpage.

Section IV. Timing of FW 410 Internships

When should FW 410 be taken?
You should aim to complete your internship requirements well before graduation, because 1) it may take some time to find one, and 2) not having met the requirement will prevent you from graduating on time. Generally, the Exploratory Internship can be completed at any time during your degree, whereas
the Intensive Internship should be completed later in your degree. The course FW 209 Careers Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences should be taken just prior to or within a couple of terms of when you want to begin looking for your internship, so plan accordingly.

**How long do I have to complete the internship?**
The length of time it takes to complete the internship will vary with the position and your schedule. Typically, most student complete this requirement between 3-6 months.

**Do I have to register for credit the same quarter I do my internship? What if my internship spans multiple terms?**
Yes, as a rule, you should register for credit the quarter that you finish the hours required for your internship (40 for exploratory and 200 for intensive). If the internship spans multiple terms, you should first get your internship approved with the Internship Coordinator and submit your Training Agreement. You will then register in the term the internship ends. Under certain circumstances (e.g., military), if you are doing a summer internship, you might be able to apply summer internship credits to fall term. Speak with the Internship Coordinator to see if this is an appropriate option for you.

**Can I stop out for a quarter of classes to complete my internship requirement?**
Yes. Some students choose to stop out from classes to complete intensive internship, but most continue to take classes.

**Section V. Funding for FW 410 Internships**

**Is there funding for unfunded or low-funded internships?**
Yes. Financial assistance is available to students participating in low-paying or volunteer internships. Students may apply at any time to the FWCS Travel and Internship Awards; please find the application on the FWCS internships webpage. Students may also apply for the E.R. Jackman Internship Support program from the College of Agricultural Sciences. Applications are accepted three times a year -- October for winter term consideration, January for spring term consideration, and April for summer and fall term consideration.

**Do we have to pay Oregon State tuition for the FW 410 Internships? Does financial aid cover the tuition for the internship?**
Your internship courses are required for the degree program, and you register and pay tuition for them as you would your other courses. Similarly, if you are eligible for financial aid, the aid can be used to pay for the credits.

**Section VI. Non-traditional Students**

Are you concerned about how you will fit in an intensive internship into your already busy schedule? Every student in our program since it started in 2009 has met the internship requirements, and so can you. It is best if you develop a specific strategy to pursue (e.g., identify the organization, supervisor, skill sets, network, or project that will advance you on a chosen career track). Seek support with the Internship Coordinator throughout the process. Do not wait until you are frustrated.
Students in FWCS who are juggling employment, children, pets, mortgages, and other responsibilities along with their education are often unable to take seasonal jobs in distant locations like traditional (campus-based) undergraduates. Instead, these students often find and complete intensive internships that are part time and longer-term, and/or remote. Often, students can create even stronger connections with their employer, as their internship lasts a longer duration than a seasonal position. See examples of non-traditional internships in the next section.

Please know that the Internship Coordinator is ready and available to work with you to find an internship that will work within your busy schedule.

**What if I can't find an internship near me?**

You will learn and practice the skills to locate or create an internship in FW 209 Career Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences. But for now, you can get creative in your search...

Many students find their internship not by looking for advertised positions, but rather by reaching out to particular organizations and starting to talk about setting up an internship. Find potential contacts by searching online to find the public lands agencies/organizations at the city, county, state, and federal level, such as city parks, state recreation areas, or National Forests. Research local non-profits like watershed councils, wildlife rehabilitation centers, or sustainability organizations. Look up environmental consulting companies in your state. Research FWCS faculty who do research that interests you; perhaps they have graduate students who could use the help of a remote intern.

Another great way to find internship opportunities is to attend a state-level conference attended by local professionals who are working in an area of career interest. Often a student meets a professional at the conference who then offers them the opportunity to gain experience and develop an internship.

**What opportunities are available for students who are homebound or who have limited mobility?**

There are so many possibilities for desk-based work in this field. In fact, students who wish to do data-focused computer work may find their opportunities for employment are increasing at a rapid pace. Some of the possibilities for internships when students have limited mobility are data management/analysis, report writing, lab work, Geographic Information Systems (e.g., mapping, remote sensing) and image (e.g., trail camera) analysis. There is also the communications/public relations aspect: science writing, designing brochures, and social media are a few examples.

**Doesn’t every professional want an intern?**

No. It takes time to supervise an intern, so you will likely have to convince a supervisor that you are worth the time, even if you are volunteering. You have to determine how you can contribute your skills to benefit the organization and find a person with an appropriate skill set who is willing to mentor you.

**Can my current FWCS-related job count as an internship requirement?**

Perhaps; especially if it is possible to do work outside of your normal scope of duties within your current organization, and thus generate a new and additive experience for your internship, in which you learn new skills and make new networking contacts. Email the Internship Coordinator with details on your position and ideas.
How can I be effective during my internship when I have to work, parent, and take courses?
It is imperative that you demonstrate high performance during internships. Most students reduce or adjust their course load; some students “stop out” for a term of courses to do their internship. Be sure to establish a personal support system while balancing internship with personal and professional responsibilities. Tell your work supervisor that you have additional academic responsibilities, arrange back-up childcare, request support from family and friends, and update your academic advisor on your internship status.

Won’t younger, traditional students outcompete me for internships and jobs?
No. FWCS biologists and organizations recognize the experience and maturity that non-traditional students generally bring. For this reason, they are often more willing to accommodate the flexible schedules of non-traditional students. Non-traditional students often use an internship to demonstrate their employability with a local organization they want to work for in the future.

Section VII. Examples of Past Internships

S. A. volunteered with a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Wildlife Biologist, 1 day each week for 4-8 hours over 6 months.

P. W. had a strong interest in GIS; she completed an independent project for Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to develop maps of key wildlife sites in state parks.

A. W. volunteered with NOAA on the Penobscot River Restoration Project where she helped conduct marine mammal and sea bird surveys for 10-12 hours/day 1-3 days per week for 8 weeks. A.W. wrote, “I am only able to work with NOAA on my days off and on some vacation time. Dr. X was OK with that and was glad for any help since he works solo and has no budget for help. I am doing all of this for free but the experience for me is invaluable.”

R. M. worked as an independent volunteer with Eastern Box Turtle Conservation Trust to radio track turtles; he located each turtle every two weeks but did it when it worked into his schedule.

J. B. volunteered for the Department of Defense at Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB), Environmental Conservation Section. J. B. is a civilian employee at VAFB. His internship was to design and implement a sampling plan for Columbian black-tailed deer and prepare a deer management plan for VAFB to include harvest quotas, military operations, human safety, and habitat carrying capacity. He worked for this supervisor as a part-time volunteer for seven months and when the supervisor retired, J.B. was asked to replace him but was not technically qualified until degree completion.

J. L. S. volunteered with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County as the wildlife biology assistant intern for 1-3 days/week over several months. She assisted the wildlife staff (wildlife biologists, wildlife specialists, wildlife technician and wildlife aids). This internship included primarily field work as well as some minor record keeping. The skills she gained were radio telemetry (with Blanding’s turtles and deer); setting up, baiting and moving turtle cage traps; blood sampling for DNA and micro-chipping Testudines (painted and snapping turtles); setting up mist nets with a decoy owl to try and catch a breeding pair of osprey to band and test blood for mercury, PCBs and organochlorine; and navigation to eastern bluebird, wren and sparrow nesting boxes to record clutch sizes and band chicks.
S. E. volunteered with Blue Frontier Campaign, a marine conservation activist organization, to develop supporting curriculum for “50 ways to Save the Ocean” by David Helvarg that included compiling a 9th-12th grade Teachers Guide and developing new materials for K-2nd grade. S.E. wrote, “This is not a project Blue Frontier was working on until I came into the picture. I came up with the concept and have run with it. Being involved in a program that gets children interested in marine science and conservation is very exciting. This project has been an excellent exercise in confidence building, because I see that despite my lack of education, I am able to conceptualize, put into motion and complete a complicated project with large organizations like National Geographic and this gives me hope for a future career that will not depend on my level of education, but rather my expertise, experience and ability to produce.”

A.H. developed an internship with her current employer, a state environmental department, by working with her supervisor to create a side project beneficial to both of them. The project involved interviewing employees across the agency to gather their ideas for better collaborations, and also learning and practicing new skills in GIS. She worked on this ‘side project’ for 4 hrs each week. She wrote, “I took this internship for granted at first. I’ve been in the real-world or workforce for almost 2 decades now. The idea of an internship aggravated me for a few reasons, one of them being that I already knew how this all worked. Turns out there was still quite a lot to learn, and I’m generally never one to think I know everything... I got to meet a lot of people that might have a large impact on my future. In fact, they already have. I learned of new position I never knew existed, new departments, new projects, new goals, new realities to how work at the state moves along...It has reinvigorated my passion which was on hold. It has re-ignited my desire to find the right position and move on from where I am now...Now more than ever I cannot wait to find my dream job or make a big change by affecting policy!

Section VIII. Steps to Complete your FWCS internships

This material is repeated on the FWCS Internships page.
1. PREPARE - around the time that you’ve completed your Biology and Chemistry series, your advisor will guide you to register for FW 209 Career Skills for Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences, a required course that will teach you the skills needed to search for, apply to, and attain internships and jobs, including resume and cover letter writing, networking, and interviewing. But even before you take FW 209, you can prepare for internships by reviewing the FWCS Careers Page, which includes the FWCS Resume and Cover Letter Guides, and reviewing the Weekly Opportunity List emails sent by the Internship Coordinator, which include a link to our internal jobs database, the FWCS Opportunity List. Make a plan of when and where you would like to intern. If you wish to attend a conference for your exploratory internship, review the linked Conference List above and explore conference websites to determine which is most interesting and feasible for you. And, get involved in clubs like the Fisheries & Wildlife Club and apply for OSU research programs aimed at freshman, sophomore, and transfer students like those mentioned in the Exploratory section above.
2. APPLY for internship/job positions.
3. EMAIL & GET APPROVED. When offered an internship/job in the FWCS field, email the Internship Coordinator immediately, providing the name of the organization, a link to the organization’s website, the position title, start/end dates, the total hours you will complete by the end of the position, and how this fits into your career goals. In this email you may include the completed Intensive Internship Training Agreement or Exploratory Internship Training Agreement, which includes your supervisor’s signature.
4. REGISTER for FW 410. If approved, the Internship Coordinator will direct you on which upcoming term to enroll in the appropriate FW 410 course. You will generally take the course the term you will complete the required 40 or 200 hours, unless previously discussed and approved with the Internship Coordinator. Remember to register for the section in your campus (Corvallis or Ecampus) and for the correct internship type, whether Exploratory (1 credit) or Intensive (3 credits).

5. REVIEW the CANVAS COURSE and the syllabus before starting your internship. Once registered, you will find all assignments in the canvas course, including the Training Agreement, which you'll need to review and sign with your supervisor before starting your internship.

6. CONSIDER FUNDING. If you’re doing a low-paying or volunteer position, read the Funding section below to learn how you can apply for internship funding awards.

7. ENJOY YOUR INTERNSHIP and complete all assignments in the canvas course. Don’t forget about the Intensive Internship Evaluation Form, which your supervisor will need to fill out and submit to you or the Internship Coordinator between Week 8 and Week 10 of the quarter.