

Guidelines for Undergraduate Students Participating in Research

Approved September 15th, 2016

The following is a guideline for Deans and their researchers for undergraduate students wishing to participate in research at the University of Pittsburgh. Included with this guideline are appendices that define terms used. Note: Under all methods of participating in research below, safety training or other required training for the student appropriate to the particular laboratory or other environment is required.

PITT UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT

University of Pittsburgh degree seeking student enrolled in the current semester or continuing enrollment in the subsequent semester (all campuses).

Student Employee

A student performing services primarily for the University's benefit in a research laboratory or on a research project or who is paid for services rendered should be hired as an hourly-student employee in accordance with the [University of Pittsburgh Student Employment Policy Manual](#).

Research Internship

1. Stipend – For a student participating in a research internship that receives a stipend, the only other requirement is a Research Internship Plan (see Appendix A for definition of a Research Internship Plan).
2. Unpaid – An unpaid internship can be performed under two different scenarios:
 - a. Course credit – The requirements for this internship are defined by the academic department as part of a course.
 - b. Educational Internship (unpaid and not-for-credit) – A research experience which includes the requirement of a Research Internship Plan (see Appendix A for definition of a Research Internship Plan) or other documented formal program recognized by a specific School.

Observer

A Pitt Student may be involved in research as an observer for gaining insight into the field (see Appendix B for definition of an observer experience).

NON-PITT UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT

Someone who is currently an undergraduate student at another university and wishes to have a research experience at the University of Pittsburgh.

Paid Employee

An undergraduate student enrolled at another institution performing services primarily for the University's benefit in a research laboratory or on a research project or who is paid for services rendered should be hired as an hourly employee in accordance with the processes and procedures of the Human Resource Department.

Research Internship

1. Stipend – For a student participating in a research internship that receives a stipend, the only other requirement is a Research Internship Plan (see Appendix A for definition of a Research Internship Plan).
2. Unpaid
 - a. Course Credit – If a non-Pitt student is taking credit for an internship, then that student is considered a Pitt student and falls under the guidelines above. The student would register for a course that provides at least one credit for successful completion.
 - b. Collaborative Internship – An internship that comes from a collaborative agreement between the University of Pittsburgh and another academic institution with an agreed upon Instructional Exchange Agreement and documented Research Internship Plan for the student. The Instructional Exchange Agreement is signed by the Dean or Associate Dean of the school hosting the program and a copy is sent to the VP for Undergraduate Studies Office, who may recommend further review if necessary.
 - c. Educational Internship – Formal Pitt program designed and recognized by the School under which the program is offered (e.g. REU) which includes a documented Research Internship Plan. (See Appendix C for guidelines in developing an Educational Research Experience Program and Appendix A for definition of a Research Internship Plan).

A non-Pitt student must follow one of the methods described above to participate in a research laboratory or in other academic environments at the university.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

An international student's eligibility to be a student employee is determined by their visa-status. Accordingly, in addition to complying with these guidelines please coordinate any international student employment with the Office of International Services.

Appendix A: Defining an Undergraduate Research Internship Plan

STUDENT RESEARCH INTERNSHIP program is an approved and monitored educational experience to gain knowledge and skills related to an academic field of study. Each internship program should define the educational benefits to the student and the responsibilities/expectations of the student. In developing an internship program the School should consider the following guidelines. The program:

- benefits the students,
- does not displace regular employees,
- consists of supervision by a faculty member or designate,
- meets specific learning goals,
- provides no entitlement of a job after the experience has been completed, and
- provides no entitlement or expectation of wages¹.

Definition of Undergraduate Research Internship Plan

A Research Internship Plan for undergraduates is a written agreement between the student and the faculty supervisor to define expectations for the research experience. The agreement should include the following:

1. Defined knowledge and/or skills to be developed by the student during the internship.
2. Defined educational goals and deliverables to be achieved by the student during the internship.
3. Supervisory structure for student (e.g. supervised by a graduate student or post-doc).
4. Progress monitoring and feedback process to ensure the internship is proceeding as planned.
5. Defined time frame for the experience.
6. Expected hours/week the internship will accommodate the academic commitments and schedule of the student.

Note: No formal format of the Research Internship Plan exists so that it can be adapted to the wide variety of research experiences that occur at the University.

¹Students participating in a research internship may receive a stipend. A proper stipend can include the reimbursement of expenses, reasonable benefits or a nominal fee.

Appendix B: Definitions of Observing in Research at the University for Pitt Students

STUDENT OBSERVING IN UNIVERSITY RESEARCH is the act of freely observing/shadowing ongoing research by others in the laboratory to gain insight into the field. Observing ongoing research or staff within a laboratory has no defined obligation by either the student or the supervisor. Thus, an observing experience includes:

- no expectation of compensation,
- no structured plan or educational outcomes,
- no tasks to be performed that are typically performed by paid employees, and
- no expectation of contact time with supervision by the faculty supervisor.

Appendix C: Developing an Educational Research Experience Program

Developing an Educational Research Experience for undergraduates requires a written plan that includes certain information. The program should be approved by the Department Chair and Dean of the School. This is an outline of the required components of the Program.

The document should include the following:

- Description of the Educational Research Experience Program
 - Purpose
 - Description
 - Oversight Responsibility
 - Mentorship Pairing and Responsibility
 - Participant Benefits
 - Evaluation Method
- Student Participant Selection Process
 - Eligibility Criteria
 - Application Process
 - Selection Criteria
 - Relevant Materials:
 - Application Form with Instructions
 - Recommendation Forms
 - Other
- Timelines
 - Application Deadline
 - Decision Notification
 - Dates of the Educational Experience (time period)
- Example of a Research Internship Plan for the Student Participants (see definition in Appendix A)
- Budget (if applicable)