

**HANDBOOK  
for the  
Texas A&M University - Texarkana  
Criminal Justice Internship Program**

*Criminal Justice Experiences in Real Life Settings*

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## Policy for Student Internships in Criminal Justice (CJ 400)

Texas A&M University-Texarkana  
College of Education and Liberal Arts  
Criminal Justice Program

CJ 400 is a credit bearing course in the criminal justice curriculum available to criminal justice majors. It is a required course for graduation for recipients of the Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice. This policy only covers students who are registered for a section of CJ 400 for academic credit. It does not cover internships that a student may pursue that are not under the auspices of this course.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

*Criminal Justice Internship is comprised of field observations and experience in an agency or organization that is part of or related to the criminal justice system and may include social service and welfare organizations and government offices in the executive, legislative, or judicial branches. The internship is designed to provide participant observation and/or actual work experience, plus reflection and analysis of the role of the organization in pursuing justice. This course integrates the principles of Experiential Learning and meets the criteria for field-work. For each 3 Semester Credit Hours earned by the student, s/he must complete 130 hours of participant observation.*

*Prerequisites: Senior Status, Approval by Instructor, Acceptance by Appropriate Organization*

Students are responsible for finding, applying to, and being chosen by an agency or organization whose mission includes criminal justice, social welfare, crime prevention, loss prevention, or similar missions. The student may use a paid internship if approved by the instructor. Student is responsible for all costs and transportation associated with the internship.

Agencies that accept students into their internship experience shall abide by federal labor laws by providing an appropriate learning experience for the student and will not displace an employee by capitalizing on an intern's labor.

The criminal justice faculty of Texas A&M-University shall develop appropriate learning outcomes and learning activities that pair with the experiences of the internship to justify the awarding of academic credit. They shall schedule the course, CJ 400, at least once each year, and shall provide appropriate syllabi and material for students and accepting agencies. Students must sign a liability waiver prior to being certified to begin observation hours by the instructor. This is in addition to any requirements of the accepting agency. Students must not participate in any direct law enforcement actions that are normally restricted to licensed peace officers.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Criminal Justice Internship is comprised of field observations and experience in an agency or organization that is part of or related to the criminal justice system and may include social service and welfare organizations, government offices in the executive, legislative, or judicial branches, and organizations working toward social justice. The internship is designed to provide participant observation and/or actual work experience, plus reflection and analysis of the role of the organization in pursuing justice. This course integrates the principles of Experiential Learning and meets the criteria for internship. For each 3 Semester Credit Hours earned by the student, s/he must complete 130 hours of participant observation.

**Prerequisites: Senior Status, Acceptance by Appropriate Organization, Approval by Instructor.**

Note: Students must earn 3 SCH in CJ 400 to earn the BSCJ degree. They may earn up to 9 credit hours of internship credit toward the BSCJ degree with 6 SCH counted as upper division electives.

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAM INTERNSHIP GUIDELINES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **INTERNSHIP PHILOSOPHY**

The combined efforts of educators and competent professionals in the field of Criminal Justice can produce an effective and meaningful learning experience through an Internship Program.

The purpose of the internship is to provide a learning experience for the student resulting in a greater understanding and appreciation for the overall justice system and, specifically, for that area in which his/her interests lie. It is intended that the student will correlate theory with practice and be stimulated to the point of challenging, examining, questioning, and analyzing those areas to which he/she is exposed. The program should also allow the student to make a contribution to the agency to which he/she is assigned through work, dialogue, and/or research and analysis.

The Internship Program will also provide students the opportunity to formalize goals and to better prepare to enter the field of his/her choice. Additionally, it will expose the student to the requirements of the employing agencies, provide an opportunity to meet those requirements, and serve as a source of recruitment for the participating agencies.

## OBJECTIVES

*The Internship should provide the following:*

1. Enhance the formal education of the student by providing first-hand experience with a participating agency or organization.
2. Student familiarization of techniques and duties of the relevant position(s) being observed (e.g. investigation, public relations, observation, communication, data collection, working with people in stressful situations, organizing, analyzing, planning, use of equipment, handling of clients, victims, prisoners, suspects, and witnesses).
3. Opportunities for the student to develop, reflect on, and communicate an awareness of his/her own values and attitudes toward people, the Criminal Justice System, and society in general, as well as knowledge, skills and abilities relevant to the organization.
4. An insight into the current problems of participating agencies with a view toward solving those problems.
5. Student exposure to the professional demands of the position.
6. Provide the student with the background necessary to formulate his career plans prior to graduation.
7. Allow agency personnel an opportunity to evaluate students and give students developmental feedback useful for professional or preprofessional development.
8. Allow the agency an opportunity to benefit from inquiries into their method of operation from a student's perspective.
9. A recruitment source for participating agencies.
10. Successfully Complete the Student Learning Outcomes

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

- Discuss the roles a specific criminal justice agency plays within the criminal justice system.
- Identify where and how theory and practice meet in a supervised work environment.
- Establish a record of conscientious participant observation in a professional environment resulting in references for possible employment and/or evidence of the capacity for advanced study.
- Demonstrate the ability to apply an experience-based knowledge of criminal justice to practical problems.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

1. NOTE: Some agencies have specific applications protocols that differ from these. Make the instructor aware of this so we can help you secure the best internship.
2. If you are attempting to secure a Federal or State agency internship, you will typically have to apply very early. These are very competitive and often come with specific schedule parameters and relocation requirements.
3. The student must be a Senior by the start of the internship semester with a major in Criminal Justice who has completed the substantial portion of the core criminal justice curriculum.
4. Secure a placement with an agency or organization whose mission is linked to criminal justice, the legal profession, social justice, social welfare, or government service in the executive, legislative, or judicial branches, and that fits your career goals. Placements must be approved by the instructor. Read the list of past participating agencies (available from the internship instructor) and note if there are special application procedures.
  - CJ 400 registration is by permission only. You must have a viable application in an agency before applying for the class. In the semester before CJ 400 is offered, an email with application information is sent to all criminal justice majors.
  - Finding an internship is similar to finding a job. The University (faculty) will not secure a placement for you. A list of past participating agencies is provided as a courtesy, but this does not guarantee that a specific agency will accept interns in any given semester.
  - Agencies that participate in our internship program are not obligated to accept any student.
  - If a student has anything in their personal history that would make it difficult or impossible to gain entry, they should discuss this with the criminal justice intern instructor or Department Chair. Depending on the organization, these can include criminal conduct, drug use, torts, legal entanglements, financial/credit problems, family members that are in the criminal justice system, etc.
  - A student may not be currently employed by the organization with which he/she proposes to do the internship without prior permission from the instructor. See the section of this Handbook covering in-service and prior service personnel.
5. The student must complete an Internship Application form and return it to the A&M-Texarkana CJ 400 instructor for the section in which they wish to enroll. Early application deadlines are set for effective management of placements and healthy relationships with agencies. Approval for course registration is usually delayed until the agency accepts the student for an intern position. If a student is later rejected, they will be dropped from the course unless a replacement internship is secured in a timely manner. Discuss this with the instructor.

6. Meet any specific qualifications as determined by the participating agency (including background checks).
7. After being accepted by the agency, notify your instructor and include the agency coordinator's name, email, and phone number. You will receive permission to register. You must notify the instructor of the number of semester credit hours that you are pursuing (3-9).
8. Once you are accepted by the agency, complete the Texas A&M University System Liability Release and return it to the course instructor.
9. Complete any other requirements that are required by the instructor or the agency (such as preliminary writing assignments, assigned readings, familiarization of agency policy or relevant statutes, etc.).
10. After the agency approves your internship and all preliminary CJ 400 activities and assignments are received by the instructor, you will receive permission to clock hours.
11. If you want to start your internship hours prior to the beginning of the term, and the organization agrees, be sure to apply early and let the instructor know. If you cannot finish all of your observation hours by the end of term despite reasonable efforts, let the instructor know and negotiate a contract for an Incomplete grade in a timely manner.

We do not presume that all students will be acceptable to the participating agencies. But we do expect each student to demonstrate a substantive attempt to gain internship placements. If a student is rejected by multiple agencies, they must contact the Criminal Justice Department Chair about feasibility of degree completion. Attempts may be made to place the student in another agency, in a research environment, in a service-learning placement, or to substitute coursework for the internship requirement. The program reserves the right to assign a student to such a placement, regardless of the student's preference, if such assignment is necessary to maintain effective agency relationships, curriculum integrity, and/or for the student to complete degree requirements. Every effort will be made, however, to assign the student to the agency in which he/she has already secured a placement.

## **Internship Options for In-Service/Post-Service Personnel**

This section applies only to students who are currently working in an agency and in a position that is viewed as an appropriate position for persons holding a bachelors degree or higher. It does not apply to pre-service students or persons working in unrelated fields. Although we do not have hard and fast rules for in-service or pre-service students, we typically offer several options for employees other than an internship in another agency. The following are guidelines for possible options that should be discussed with the internship instructor.

If you have several years of experience, we will waive the requirement and allow you to take an additional upper division CJ course. Contact the Program Coordinator or Dean for a waiver of the CJ 400 requirement and substitution.

If you are a new employee with less than a year in service, we allow you to use your job as your internship placement within the context of an organized CJ 400 section; but your agency/supervisor must agree to that and sign off on our daily logs and complete our intern evaluation form.

If you have over one year of experience, you have these options:

If your employer gives you a temporary assignment in a new and different kind of work than your current or past positions, we will allow you to use that. It still needs to meet the 130 hour requirement, but they do not all have to be in one three week stretch. They can be scattered in chunks and they may include some time in your normal duties as long as those help your analysis and knowledge of the temporary assignment.

If your employer gives you a substantial special task in addition to your normal duties that is research, development, and/or policy oriented (such as researching and developing a new draft policy, or researching, creating and giving a new training module, or writing a white paper for the agency on a work related topic). This may not by itself add up to 130 hours, but should do so when including discussions with management and staff related to the project. This may include some time in your normal duties as long as those help your analysis and knowledge of the special task.

If you participate in a technical, supervisory, or management professional school that is credited by a university such as the FBI National Academy, Southern Police Institute, Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas, Caruth Institute, etc. that may count as your internship. It will not count however if college credit for the program is transferred to TAMUT for credit towards your degree.

Some combination of the above may be approved depending on circumstances.

## STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Complete the agency and university applications processes in a timely manner.
2. Complete course requirements and assignments by posted deadline dates.
3. Maintain medical/hospitalization insurance throughout the internship.
4. Establish a working schedule with the agency coordinator and submit a copy to the CJ 400 internship coordinator.
5. Complete 130 clock hours in the agency for each 3 semester credit hours.
6. Become familiar with agency policies and regulations and abide by them.
7. Become familiar with major laws, regulations and agency policies that pertain to the particular agency with which you are involved.
8. Be punctual and reliable in meeting responsibilities.
9. Report to your agency supervisor well groomed and professionally dressed for the type of activities you are scheduled to perform. The agency will establish appropriate grooming and dress standards.
10. Meet the requirements established by the instructor for the particular internship in which you are involved.
  - Initial pre-internship activities will be provided by the instructor.
  - A syllabus and assignments document will be provided at the beginning of the term. Blackboard and email will be used as the primary means of communication and to turn in written assignments. Access to Bb will be needed weekly.
  - Assignments have due dates. Failure to meet those deadlines will result in reduced scores.
  - A mandatory class meeting and debriefing will be held at least once during the internship (usually at the end of the term: check your syllabus and plan accordingly).

There is no obligation on the part of an agency to accept a student for internship, nor to maintain the student as an intern. The course professor may temporarily suspend or permanently terminate a student internship at any time during the semester if in their judgment continuation of the internship is not in the best interest of the student, the university or the participating agency. It is also understood that failure to meet internship requirements may result in the professor dropping the student from the course and/or an F in the course.

## LIABILITY WAIVER

You are required to closely read and complete the Texas A&M University System Liability “Waiver, Indemnification, and Medical Treatment Form” provided by the instructor. The original hard copy must be turned in. If you are not in town, you may mail the document to the CJ 400 Instructor. This is a legal document. If you have ANY questions about the contents of the form, you should consult a lawyer. At the very least, you should contact the instructor with any misgivings.

In the form provided by us, the blanks in paragraphs 1 and 2 (on page 1) are pre-filled for you.

The instructor must receive the waiver before you will be cleared to clock internship hours.

### Risks and Dangers

In plain language, internships in or related to the criminal justice system and/or persons in distress are inherently dangerous.

We require all of our CJ majors to take internships and even the most benign appearing placement may include dangerous or stressful events. By the very nature of these internships students are up-close and personal with trauma and sometimes danger: increased stress levels, violent threats, and observing emotional crises may be common depending on the placement. High-speed pursuits are not uncommon in policing. And within the realm of unlikely possibilities are exposure to criminal assaults, gun fights, and diseases (such as hepatitis, tuberculosis, etc.) These are normal criminal justice career hazards. This should underline for you why agency supervisors place parameters on your activity and expect you to follow commands without asking questions until later. It is a matter of your safety.

Much more common than physical danger is emotional trauma and stress induced by the environments (poverty-ridden neighborhoods, families in distress), or traumatic circumstances such as child victims, mental illnesses, injuries, deaths, etc. Plus there is the additional stress due to wanting to make a good impression to the people you are working for, while feeling out of place. For these reasons, we want to emphasize mental health and self-care. If you begin to feel overwhelmed by the stress of your internship, you should discuss that with your instructor. If these feelings are affecting your performance, sleep, well-being, etc. you should contact the University Counseling Center <https://tamut.edu/Campus-Life/Counseling-Center/index.html>.

A student may set up an appointment with a counselor by visiting our office or by calling (903) 223-3186. Students may also email [counseling.services@ace.tamut.edu](mailto:counseling.services@ace.tamut.edu) ; however, please note that email is not a confidential form of communication.

**Texas A&M University-Texarkana  
Criminal Justice Program**

## **CJ 400 Internship – Agency Coordinator Information**

Thank you for providing this wonderful educational opportunity to our student. Experiential Learning is one of the most enjoyable forms of education because it integrates observation, thinking, doing, and communicating in a real world environment. This is not only an opportunity for the student to learn more about your agency and its career potential, it is an opportunity for your agency to evaluate, shape and/or recruit a future employee. We hope you will also take it as an opportunity to give feedback and suggestions to Texas A&M University-Texarkana on what we could do better in preparing pre-professional criminal justice students to work in justice and social service fields.

Because we place students in a variety of criminal justice, justice related, and social service agencies, it is impossible to provide specific guidelines that fit all of them. The following are our expectations and general guidelines for your agency to shape within your unique mission and organization.

### **On Site Internship Coordinator Tasks**

- In order to meet the education objectives and federal law, interns must participate actively in their internship to the extent possible but are not to replace an employee. The internship must focus on student learning.
- The student must complete 130 clock hours with the agency for each 3 semester credit hours received. The student must make clear to you if they are seeking 130, 260, or 390 hours of internship time in the agency. How those are scheduled is negotiated between the student and agency. Students normally complete all hours in a single semester, however there are some students who due to class and work schedules may start before their term of record or extend the time needed into a second term.
- Some students wish to engage in extended internship time for personal development. If you have questions at any time about whether a student is enrolled in our internship course, please do not hesitate to ask me.
- Before the internship begins, or no later than the first day, please clarify with the student expectations for scheduling, communication, dress, grooming, professional bearing, behavior, social media, etc. This would also be the time to identify agency policies or relevant legal codes with which they need to read.
- The intern will have a daily log that must be filled out each day that they work for the agency. It is their responsibility to come to work each day with their portfolio or clipboard, writing material, and daily log sheets. The supervisor assesses the student at the end of each day and initials the log before the student leaves each day and the completed log is turned in to the agency coordinator for review. Because there is an academic writing component in this internship, we ask that the student be allowed to use down time to write if they are not otherwise occupied with active observations or agency tasks.

#### **Supervisors and Coordinators?**

Different agencies use different terminology. We use the word supervisor to refer to employees that a student is shadowing on a given day. We use the word coordinator to refer to the person who is the primary point of contact at the agency that coordinates interns coming to the agency (or part of an agency). The Coordinator is also the person who is the contact for the instructor of the course overseeing academic credit for the student. Depending on the agency, a student may have a different supervisor every day or the same one all semester. The coordinator may or may not be a daily supervisor.

- At the end of the internship, the agency intern coordinator completes a final evaluation of the student and gives them an exit briefing including suggestions for improving their professional potential. The final evaluation is returned directly to the instructor. The evaluation form is included in this packet or may be obtained from the student.
- We appreciate it when an agency works with a student's schedule, but the student (and his or her expectations) must fit with the agency needs and requirements. Your initial interview with a student should establish what parameters you will place on their work hours as well as how flexible those can be. An internship will have a substantial amount of observation, but should also include either real or mock substantive, productive activities. It should not be only a "clerk" position that is normally filled by an employee, answering phones, filing, etc. without learning the professional side of the agency. Some of that kind of work is appropriate, but interns are to be treated as pre-professionals who are paired with working professionals to observe, explore, and learn.
- When possible interns should be placed with daily supervisors who excel in their profession and/or who have training experience (for example, a Field Training Officer) in order to increase student interaction focused on student learning. Obviously, our interns are often in situations and agencies where they are not legally permitted to perform the actual work being done by agents of the organization. However, they can perform parallel tasks that are observed by their supervisor. For example, while shadowing an employee, the employee should quiz the student about what they are observing, what would they do under the circumstances, etc. They should require the student to write narrative reports as if those would be official reports, that they can compare with reports that an employee writes and then have their work critiqued for improvement.
- Interns have several assigned essays that require input from the agency (such as agency policies or mission statements) and personnel. These are reflection essays based on activities in their textbook, previous learning, and their observations in the agency. Interns should show these assignments to their supervisors to seek advice on how best to gain the information needed for the assignments.

If an intern must be reprimanded (most commonly for tardiness or dress code violations, but occasionally for something more serious), please call or email the instructor about the situation. We view this as part of their professional development and want students to learn to take correction as professionals to improve their professional bearing and future performance. If a student engages in a problematic pattern of behavior, please contact the instructor to discuss options. If the student engages in egregious behavior such that they must be suspended or terminated immediately, please contact the instructor as soon as appropriate.

If an intern has been injured, please contact Texas A&M University-Texarkana Police immediately at 903-334-6611 and they will alert the appropriate campus representatives.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact the instructor of the student's course. We recognize the sacrifice your agency makes on our behalf and welcome your cooperation in this process. We want to do our best to maintain the healthiest of relationships with our internship agency partners.

**Student Intern Performance Evaluation**

Circle the appropriate score in each category based on your overall evaluation of the student’s performance and growth demonstrated over the course of their internship. Use the following as a guide:

10 = (100%) Superior student, demonstrating the traits of someone you would like to hire.

7 = 70% or Minimally Acceptable; 5-6 = 50-60%, Demonstrating potential, but still does not show adequate ability or responsibility, 1= Behavior sufficiently problematic to warrant termination.

- 1. The intern was on time every day, with their portfolio, motivated to work/observe: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)
- 2. The intern kept to their assigned schedule and function: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)
- 3. The intern followed instructions and learned quickly: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)
- 4. The intern dressed appropriately: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)
- 5. The intern demonstrated professional social interactions: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)
- 6. The intern demonstrated professional communication skills: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)
- 7. The intern was an asset to your organization: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)
- 8. The intern followed the rules of your agency: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)

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The following elements provide feedback for the student and our program. Use the back for extra space & additional comments. Omit any question you are uncomfortable answering.

- 9. Compared to recent applicants, what is the probability you would hire this student? 25% 50% 75% 99%
- 10. Would you be willing to serve as a reference for this student? Yes No
- 11. Did the student help or hurt the reputation of A&M-Texarkana? Hurt No Effect Helped
- 12. What suggestions do you have for the student to improve their employment and promotion potential?

13. How could the Criminal Justice Internship Program at Texas A&M University-Texarkana be improved?

Name of intern: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

- Did you discuss this evaluation with the student?  Yes  No
- May I share this evaluation with the student?  Yes  No