

## **Internship Journal and Reflection Paper Tips**

### **EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

Learning theorists, like David Kolb and Donald Schon, point to the conclusion that practical experience followed by reflection is a necessary component in completing the cycle of learning. In order to make the most of your internship, consider following these tips as you write to reflect on your experience. *Journal entries and papers are considered confidential, only to be shared between you and your mentor/instructor. If the mentor wishes to share any part of your writing, they will seek your permission.*

**Reflection Journal Tips** – Your mentor may request that you submit a journal entry to them on a regular basis (weekly, bi-weekly, etc.). Record the critical events of your experience, including your responses, thoughts and feelings about those events and situations. In each journal entry, try to reflect on things that engage you. This could be something that surprises you about the organization or its procedures, or something especially interesting that happened. A good type of reflection is where you try to explain a situation, characteristic or event, speculating on why it happened. Also, you may wish to speculate about the implications of this phenomenon for the future. Your reflection could involve connecting something that you learned in the internship with another experience or class topic/assignment.

**Summative Reflection Paper** – A final project for the internship may be a summative paper in which you reflect on your entire experience working at your host site. Consider using following outline or the questions on the next page to write the reflection paper.

#### *A. Organization/Program*

Write a brief sketch of the organization/program. Identify its goals and mission. Comment on your perception of its strengths and weaknesses. Summarize the history. Describe the culture of the organization: dress, level of formality, physical structure of offices and how they are assigned, staff meeting style, the hierarchy, worker input in decision-making, values, and reward system. Describe the organization/program's structure and your role in it.

#### *B. Change*

Describe changes in your perception of the organization during this experience. What original assumptions have been challenged? In what ways has your understanding deepened?

#### *C. Learning Objectives*

Describe the challenges and successes in your efforts to accomplish each of your initial objectives. Be specific. What feedback did you receive? Identify the specific outcomes for each objective, including any changes that were necessary.

#### *D. Academic Connections*

In what ways has this experience related to what you have learned in the classroom? What are the connections between this experience and the knowledge you have gleaned from your academic work?

#### *E. Personal Development*

Describe the skills you acquired or polished during this experience. Describe the specific contributions you made (the way the role was different because you were in that role). Comment on whether this role seemed to fit your talents, abilities, values, and interests. Identify the extent of your personal growth. How did it affect your strengths and weaknesses? Comments on how this experience relates to your future.

#### *F. Evaluation*

Summarize your experience in a final paragraph.

## **Possible Reflection Questions/Topics**

### **EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

Consider the following questions or topics as you write your journal entries or summative paper.

1. Give a brief job description including – employer, location, tasks, setting.
2. How did you obtain your position? Do you have tips for other students?
3. Describe the initial training/orientation you received. Describe your transition.
4. What are the connections between what you learned in the experience and what you learned in the classroom? Highlight contributions of coursework to work experience and vice versa.
5. How did your experience affect the quality of your classroom work and deepen your understanding?
6. How does your experience relate to what you want to do after graduation? What did you discover about your fit in this type of career?
7. How did you succeed in meeting each of your Learning Objectives? Be specific.
8. What feedback did you receive? How did you deal with criticism? What did you learn from your mistakes?
9. What skills did you acquire/polish during the experience? How did the experience challenge you?
10. What did you contribute to the company?
11. What difficulties or problems did you encounter and how did you find solutions?
12. Describe organizational culture – dress, level of formality, physical office structure, staff meetings, hierarchy, worker input in decision-making, values, or reward system.
13. Is the percentage of women, minority, and disabled employees at your site representative of the community population? Have you observed any sexism, racism, ageism or other discrimination? What is your response?
14. What insights into the professional world have you gained as a result of your experience?
15. What changes did you see in yourself or the organization as a result of your experience?
16. Describe the management style of your supervisor. What style do you prefer and why?
17. Describe your style as an intern. Example: assertive, responsible, inquisitive, patient, etc.
18. What art (song, poetry, cartoons) come to mind that speak to and illustrate your experience?
19. What did you discover about your fit in this type of career? What are the pros and cons of a career in this arena?
20. What insights into the professional work world have you gained as a result of your experience? What will you take with you into the future?
21. What did you value most in your experience? Would you recommend this experience to other students?
22. Prepare an “elevator speech” (30 second statement) that you could use to tell recruiters and friends about your experience.

This document is used with input from Elon University’s Student Professional Development Center.

#### References:

Kolb, D. A. and Fry, R. (1975). Toward an applied theory of experiential learning. In C. Cooper (Ed.), *Theories of Group Process*. London: John Wiley.

Schon, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.