



# Guidelines for Master of Archival Studies Internship

These guidelines are designed to give students and host institutions an understanding of the nature, function, scope, and requirements of the Internship course in the Master of Archival Studies (MAS) curriculum, and to assist supervisors in preparing a program of activities for the student.

The Internship course (ARST 595) is viewed by SLAIS as an integral part of a student's program of studies and as an endeavour serving primarily the student's educational goals rather than the hosting organization. It provides students with an opportunity to test the knowledge they have acquired in the first year of studies. It may also be regarded as a training exercise in the practices and procedures of the host organization and as an opportunity for professionals in the field to contribute to the formation of future members of their profession.

SLAIS recognizes that host organizations seek to have students complete tasks that contribute to organizational goals. The art of developing an Internship program that address the goals of all concerned parties consists in harmonizing the student's educational needs with the host's desire to benefit from work undertaken by the intern. This harmonization is best achieved by assigning students a variety of tasks and supervising their work. Although students will learn the organization's practices primarily by doing the work, it may also be appropriate in some cases for them to observe how the work is carried out by experienced professionals and to be involved in decision making processes, where they can test how to use in an integrated way the theoretical knowledge acquired in separate courses by participating in the discussion. In this way, both students and institutions should benefit from the Internship.

## **I. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE INTERNSHIP**

The Internship is an optional 3-credit course in the 48-credit MAS program. The objectives of the Internship are:

1. to test in a practical setting the knowledge the student has acquired in course work;
2. to give the student experience of the basic functions and activities performed by archivists and/or records and information managers; and
3. to assess the student's ability to accomplish one or more tasks or projects requiring a written product.

The course consists of practical experience and the observation of the professional work of others. It takes place in a recognized organizational setting under the supervision of an experienced professional. It offers the opportunity to gain an experiential understanding of basic archival functions.

Students must have completed 24 course credits before undertaking an Internship. SLAIS may not be able to place all students, and reserves the right to deny an application on the basis of the student's academic standing.

Students are placed in a wide range of settings where records and archival fonds are managed, knowledgeable professional supervision is available, and an internship program can be designed that meets the objectives of the course.

Students may not receive remuneration while on Internship.

The Internship normally lasts for three months (12 weeks). Long experience has shown that this is the optimum duration to allow the student to become familiar with an organization's practices and procedures, to perform work in a wide range of basic functions, and to complete several tasks or projects.

Students must submit a final report to SLAIS on completion of the Internship, with attached copies of any written work produced in the course of the Internship. Evaluation is based solely on this report. The contents of the report are given in section VI.

## **II. CURRICULUM OF THE FIRST YEAR**

The Internship may be taken any time after completion of the four (4) archival core courses and 12 additional credits of archival studies (ARST) elective courses. The descriptions of the core courses are as follows:

- *Archival Diplomatics*: The characteristics of archival documents, their genesis and form, and their relationships with the facts, acts, and events embedded in them.
- *Arrangement and Description of Archival Documents*: The aggregations of archival documents, their interrelationships, and the principles and methods of their arrangement.
- *Management of Current Records*: The principles and methods for the management of active and semi-active records created by contemporary organizations.
- *Selection and Acquisition of Archival Documents*: The formation of society's documentary heritage; the concepts of selection and acquisition and their evolution; acquisition policies; principles and methods of evaluation; and means for establishing physical and legal control over accessions.

## **III. CONTRIBUTION OF SLAIS**

In addition to initiating and making arrangements to place students, SLAIS will also undertake:

1. to inform the host organization of the content of the specific student's completed core and elective courses to assist supervisors in developing a plan of work for the intern;
2. to consult with the host organization during the development of the Internship plan of work and possible supervisors to be assigned to the student ;

3. to assist the supervisor in developing a schedule of work and selecting tasks for the student; and
4. to have a faculty member contact the supervisor by phone, or when possible in-person, to discuss the student's work.

Every effort will be made to assist the host organization to make the Internship a success from all points of view.

#### **IV. CONTRIBUTION OF THE HOST ORGANIZATION**

##### **Supervision**

After agreeing to take an intern, the host organization is asked:

1. to designate an experienced professional to supervise the overall work of the intern; sometimes it is entirely appropriate that different persons direct different components of the Internship plan;
2. to prepare a written plan of work for the intern and have it approved by SLAIS;
3. to supervise the work of the intern;
4. to provide the intern with an evaluation of the quality of his or her work.

The supervisor should be someone interested in mentoring young professionals and able to spend modest amounts of time explaining things to the student. The intern will be expected to work independently once given directions, but there will inevitably be the need for asking questions and for discussing the best way to do things or the procedure to follow.

The next section of these guidelines addresses the organization of a plan of work for the intern. The host organization is given considerable latitude to create a plan of work suitable to its situation, with input from SLAIS as appropriate. If a site visit by one of the SLAIS professors is impossible, other arrangements will be made for SLAIS to consult with the host organization to monitor the intern's progress.

##### **Evaluation**

In evaluating the intern's work, supervisors are advised to use the organization's normal method for evaluating work performance. The evaluation may be oral or written. This exercise is meant to give the intern an appreciation of performance evaluation and the expectations of employers, and is an important part of the Internship. The evaluation does not need to be shared with SLAIS; it is confidential information between the intern and supervisor. It is up to the organization to decide whether to ask the intern to evaluate his or her experience. In terms of grades, a Pass/Fail mark is assigned by SLAIS, upon completion of the Internship requirements, to the student's final report.

## **V. ORGANIZING A PLAN OF WORK**

The intern should be provided with a plan of work. This section explores various considerations in developing the plan.

### **Assigning the intern to an area of work**

In larger organizations, it may be necessary to assign the intern to work in more than one division or section in order to provide a rounded experience of different functions or activities. However, where feasible, it is best to assign the intern to one area (e.g. public records, war records), because it is important to go into the work in some depth and detail. If a rotation among several divisions or sections is planned, it is advisable to assign the intern to a different supervisor in each area.

### **Kinds of work to be assigned**

Ideally, the intern should have experience of the entire range of basic functions carried out in the organization by professional records or information managers or archivists. In archival institutions or programs, this would include experience of appraisal, acquisition, accessioning, arrangement, description, basic preservation, and reference service. In organizations or units where the work focuses on current records, the intern might gain experience of records inventorying, scheduling, records registration, records classification, access clearance or response to access requests, records disposal, or user service. As well, interns should be introduced to the structure, procedures, and management practices of the institution, organization or program where they work. It is easier for most organizations to assign tasks consisting of arranging and describing materials, but supervisors are encouraged to give the intern experience of other functions as much as possible. One approach is to have the student work together with someone experienced for a short while, and then carry on independently. The aim is to allow the student to make his/her own judgments and discuss them with the supervisor.

### **Kinds of tasks to be assigned**

#### **A. Arrangement and Description**

- recording an accession
- arranging an aggregation of records, including selection of name and subject access points
- entering descriptions into a database
- preparing a subject or thematic guide
- authority work
- using automated systems

#### **B. Appraisal**

- evaluating a potential acquisition and reporting the decision
- appraising an aggregation of records for selection and reporting the decision
- preparing an evaluative report on an aggregation of records for monetary appraisers
- preparing a records schedule

### **C. Acquisition**

- involving the intern in negotiations, etc. for an acquisition
- involving the intern in writing a contract or completing documentation for an acquisition
- involving the intern in a site visit to prepare a transfer or acquisition

### **D. Preservation**

Preservation activities will naturally come up while processing materials, but the intern may be asked to write a report on additional preservation concerns or assess existing holdings for preservation purposes.

**Note:** Most, but not all, students will have taken Preservation as part of their second-term electives.

### **E. Reference service and public programming**

- responding to written requests for information about holdings
- serving as a reference archivist
- taking part in some aspect of public programming, such as helping to prepare an exhibition, preparing a press release or brochure, etc.
- helping users within the organization with records related issues

### **F. Other tasks**

Some of the best learning experiences of interns involve them in evaluating practices or procedures and reporting to the organization on the results of their investigation. Often, this kind of work helps the organization refine its practices or procedures. Of course, interns are not seasoned analysts of practice, but the whole of their studies points in that direction. Such tasks might include:

- designing a form;
- preparing a document outlining a procedure;
- writing a report with recommendations on an aspect of the work of the institution where development or change is desired; or
- gathering and evaluating statistics on an aspect of the work.

Tasks of this kind are best assigned late in the Internship, and should be limited in scope and take no more than a week or two at most.

## **VI. INTERN'S REPORT**

Each intern is asked to submit a report of about 2500 words (10 pages) assessing the Internship as a learning experience. The report should include:

1. an account of the mandate or responsibility of the institution, organization or unit where the intern worked;
2. an account of the activities or projects the intern carried out; and
3. an assessment of how well the intern was prepared by studies in the MAS for each task carried out.

The intern should attach to the report a copy of any written work, such as a finding aid, report, reference letter, etc.

SLAIS is very grateful to institutions and organizations that take on the task of supervising an intern. Past experience shows that the Internship is mutually rewarding.