

FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions About Internships for EEB Graduate Students

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Purpose: Some students may find it beneficial to participate in an extramurally funded internship. Many types of internships exist, each with their own stipulations/compensation/duration. While internships can provide invaluable training that can benefit dissertation research, they may have implications for your funding (stipend, tuition, insurance, promised amounts, and eligibility for future funding), completion of dissertation research, and time to degree completion. Hence, to remain in good standing with the EEB Graduate Program, the student, their advisor, and the EEB GPD must write an agreement about the nature of the internship before the student may embark upon it. This plan must explicitly balance the *benefits* of an internship (e.g., training, networking, future employment) vs. the *costs* (potentially slower time to degree completion).

Guidance applies to: Mostly post-Candidate students; possibly to second-third year students; not to 1st years

Note: It may take considerable advance planning to cover tuition, salary, and insurance costs, possibly necessitating help from Biology and CGO staff with the details. Please plan ahead.

Disclaimer: All advice below about funding, insurance, etc., is intended as guidance. It is all subject to change and can become out of date as the College and University shift policy.

Use with: form for internships ([doc](#))

Introduction

Internships enable students interested in the private and government sectors to explore potential employment opportunities, to build their professional network, and to determine if a specific career path best suits them. Additionally, many companies and government organizations offer internships to recruit students after graduation. However, internships can slow progress on dissertation work, especially if the student is unable to carry out research during the internship or enroll in an essential course that is offered infrequently. Internships also pose key financial logistics that require planning and foresight.

Therefore, to ensure that students stay on track for graduation, the EEB Graduate Program offers the following guidance to Ph.D. students seeking internships. Given the short duration of the program, Masters students in EEB are *not* eligible for internships while enrolled as in the EEB graduate program (2-3 years)¹.

What kinds of internship opportunities exist?

There are many different kinds of internships available to graduate students. Starting in 2022, the graduate program office will set-up and maintain a website listing internship opportunities for EEB graduate students.

¹ Masters students who are interested in internships are encouraged to pursue programs such as the federal [Pathways Recent Graduates Program](#).

Among Federal agencies, these stand out as being the most relevant for EEB students. These are:

[USDA's Internship Program](#).

The [CDC](#) offers several programs.

[NSF's INTERN program](#) | This program is for students or PIs with NSF active grants (GRFs included).

[DOE's Graduate Student Research \(SCGSR\) Program](#) | This program supports students to conduct part of their thesis research at a DOE laboratory/facility (in select research areas) and is only eligible for students who have advanced to candidacy.

UGS's [Future Faculty Teaching Fellowship](#) | Used to support teaching at a regional IU campus, Butler, or an HBCU.

[Pathways To Federal Careers](#) | [USGS Cooperative Summer Fellowship Program](#) | [USFWS Direct Training Program](#)

EEB students are advised to meet with a career counselor at the College's Walter Center as they consider plans for internships ([link](#)).

When should I start planning for an internship?

As soon as you can!

Students who are considering an internship should discuss possible with their PI, ideally *within the first or second year*. The student and PI need to communicate clear expectations about the purpose of the internship. PIs should fully support the internship before any paperwork is filed.

Who is eligible for an internship?

(1) The normal eligibility:

Internships are eligible to all students in the Ph.D. program who have successfully completed both Part 1 (general knowledge) and Part 2 (research proposal) of their exams (i.e., have become PhD Candidates). Students must discuss their plans with their Advisor and Advisory Committee. The committee will help the students gauge whether the internship may interfere with a student's progress towards degree completion by slowing research progress.

(2) What if I want to conduct an internship before I am a PhD Candidate, i.e., in my second or third year?

In special circumstances, students may petition their Advisor, Committee, and the EEB GPD to leave for an internship before becoming a PhD Candidate. However, full justification for this request must be written and approved by all parties. Depending on the details and rationale, the student may or may not have the flexibility to stop timelines for Qualifying Exams, and the Advisor/Program may or not approve of the internship.

(3) More related guidance of the EEB Graduate Program - on timing:

EEB does not wish to exert blanket rules – each student and their opportunity is unique and should be

discussed with Advisory/Research Committees². However, some general principles likely apply:

- (A) It is best to start an internship after being becoming a Candidate at the earliest (i.e., passing exams 1 and 2, completing course work, and filing candidacy paperwork with the UGS).
- (B) EEB will not generally permit and/or will strongly discourage students from leaving for an internship during their first full year. The first summer is too crucial for piloting experiments, deep reading, learning techniques, etc.
- (C) It also remains inadvisable to leave before passing prelim part 1 (general knowledge). The EEB Program may not approve pausing the exam timeline for an internship, and the internship likely will not better prepare the student for the exam.

How should I start planning for an internship?

(1) *Permission:*

Prior to starting an internship, the student must provide the EEB GPD with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU; separate document). It should describe the nature and purpose of the internship, answer some key questions, and be signed by the student, Advisor, and EEB GPD.

(2) *Funding:*

- (A) Who pays? Funding for full- or partial academic year internships could come from the companies, agencies, or organizations hosting the internship. Additionally, the College has a limited number of full and partial-year (including summer) [Griffin Summer Pathways Fellowships](#) available to qualifying PhD students³. This fellowship can fill gaps in stipend support. Otherwise, if the internship period spans only a portion of the semester, the student and PI must plan how to fund the remainder of the semester. In that case, students would very likely not have access to Aships or Biology funding. Please realize that neither Biology nor the Advisor are required to fund the student during their time away from the University⁴.
- (B) Enrollment: All PhD students are required by the College/UGS to maintain continuous enrollment, either via G901 (if eligible) or a minimum of 1 credit of L800 or equivalent (must be paid for by the student/internship provider).⁵

² **Misc. cases:** We are also aware that some fellowships may require internships, e.g., DoD SMART. Those cases are handled individually.

³ **Stipend support:** The College's Walter Center (see [here – just apply in the portal](#)) also offers financial support for fellowships. These can help compensate for internships that cannot fully replace stipends. When a student decides to pursue a fellowship, they should try these options and others may that arise at the University.

⁴ Students should recognize that acceptance of an internship may mean that they are not paid their '**promised amount**' in their offer letters.

⁵ **Continuous enrollment** is a requirement in the Graduate Bulletin (from the UGS) and must be maintained to remain in 'good standing' with the program. All students must enroll in at least one credit per semester. This enrollment also enables the College to

- (C) International students: International students interested in internships may need a letter of support from the Office of International Services (due to visa considerations). A letter from the PI to OIS that explains how the internship is vital to the dissertation may be all that is needed, but responsibility will fall on the student to ensure all visa requirements are met.
- (D) Summer: For internships that occur during the summer, the PI is not expected to fund the student. Biology and individual advisors will not be responsible for ensuring the promised annual stipend in such cases.⁴

(3) **Insurance:**

The student should identify ahead of time how their health insurance will be covered. Some considerations (students must investigate details): coverage from an SAAsip during Spring might extend during summer, but an internship in spring might not receive SAA insurance (eliminating coverage for spring and summer). IU's Fellowship insurance for graduate students ([link for DGS/GPD/Grad Staff](#)) could be purchased⁶.

(4) **Implications for time to degree completion:**

- (A) Accounting for / planning for delays: Both student and PI should recognize that an internship can lengthen the time to degree and should make plans to account for possible delays.
- (B) Expectation for completion: Both parties must agree on expectations for completing the PhD degree following completion of the internship.
- (C) Eligibility for additional funding from Biology: Regarding support promised in offer letters (5 years), Biology presently will not count a fall or spring semester internship against the promised timeline of support. Eligibility for support via SAA-Aships would follow normal Biology policy. However, internships during the summer will not increase eligibility for additional support from Biology.
- (D) Maintenance of 'good standing' via 'satisfactory progress': The student must discuss with their Advisory/Research Committee how the internship will impact 'satisfactory progress' toward degree completion. The Committee then should describe, in their committee meeting report, how the internship factored into the annual evaluation.

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact the EEB Graduate Program Director (eebgpd@indiana.edu).

find ways to supplement stipends, route insurance, etc. Students cannot take Leave of Absence for an internship ([CGO policy](#)). Leaves are meant for non-academic, non-degree pauses in a Program of Study.

⁶ RE: **Fellowship insurance**: As of 2022, there are certain minimum requirements that must be met. Domestic students interested in this possibility must work with departmental HR / CGO, who would set up the proper fellowship mechanism to enable this insurance option. COBRA insurance may also be possible to secure. International students can also purchase insurance on their own plan offered by IU.