Internship Overview

Introduction

The primary purpose of the MPA internship is to provide students with meaningful experiences in applying what they have learned through classes in real-world settings. The internship also provides support and assistance to organizations and agencies in their efforts to address community needs. Student interns are expected to engage in professional tasks and projects in areas such as the development, planning, implementation, and analysis/evaluation of policy, finance, management, supervision, strategy, program, and other administrative tasks. The internship and capstone experiences often help students make important career choices by determining the administrative functions and areas in which they are most interested. Through the internship, students often make important discoveries and professional connections. This excellent opportunity to network may be very helpful when preparing to enter the job market.

Students must spend at least 300 hours in their internship placement. This is often spread over approximately 15 weeks (20 hours per week) and may be completed during fall, spring or summer semesters. The completed MPA internship course (PAFF 594) earns two-credits and is graded on a pass/fail basis.

Preparing for and arranging an internship requires planning, time, and attention over a period of at least a semester. An Internship Checklist, included on page 5 of this handbook, has been developed to guide students throughout the process.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible for internship, the student must have:

1. At least 18 credits in the MPA program, including PAFF-510 (Logic of Inquiry), PAFF-520 (21st Century Governance), and PAFF-521 (Foundations of Public Service);
2. At least a B in all required MPA courses;
3. At least a 3.0 cumulative GPA prior to beginning the internship course;
4. Attended at least one Internship Information meeting or met with the Internship Coordinator prior to choosing an internship site;
5. A favorable mid-semester assessment in the semester prior to beginning the internship course.

Registration

Students are not able to directly register themselves in the MPA internship course, PAFF 594. Only after completion of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and approval by the Site Supervisor and the Internship Coordinator, can the student request registration through the Internship Coordinator. It is recommended that the site selection and MOU development process begin early enough in the previous semester so that the student can initiate the internship as planned.

Students must register for the internship in the same semester in which they begin the internship. For example, if the student intends to complete the internship during the summer months, he/she must register for PAFF 594-Internship during the summer term and pay tuition for that term. Students are advised to plan
accordingly, since there are a minimum number of credits required to receive loans and other forms of student aid.

**Internship Sites**

Students are encouraged to select internship sites that are within their area of concentration or interest in a government or nonprofit setting. In-career students employed in public agencies or nonprofit organizations may conduct their internship at their place of employment under the supervision of a higher level administrator or manager. Internship site supervisors may only supervise one MPA intern per semester.

Selecting an internship site is one of the most important decisions a student makes and should be undertaken with great consideration and care. After the general informational session held each semester, the Internship Coordinator is available to meet with each student individually to discuss and narrow down site options. Students will regularly receive numerous internship announcements and other opportunities via the MPA listserv. In addition, the student should investigate potential sites using resources available on the department’s website.

The student is responsible for contacting prospective sites, submitting applications, and scheduling interviews. This will require a well-written, updated résumé, as well as a compelling letter. For basic guidelines in the creation of résumés and letters, please visit the University’s Career Development Center. The Internship Coordinator is also available to review resumes and cover letters upon request.

**Expectations of Students**

As a graduate student who has completed two semesters of MPA coursework, the duties of the student during the internship must exceed those typically assigned to undergraduate level interns. The student must have administrative responsibilities throughout the internship in order to receive credit. Examples of administrative responsibilities include program evaluation, program development, policy analysis, financial analysis, research, and strategic planning.

When preparing to interview for a potential internship opportunity, think of it as a formal job interview. Dress conservatively, avoid heavy perfumes or deodorants and consider removing additional piercings. Binghamton University’s Career Development Center has written a guide to help you prepare.

The student intern should have little or no office support/secretarial duties and may not provide direct services to clients. In addition to being involved in such administrative processes, the student should be included in organizational meetings and other general events in order to maximize the overall learning experience.

To receive a passing grade for the internship, students must:
- Receive a favorable mid-semester report from the Site Supervisor to the Internship Coordinator
- Receive a favorable, written, final evaluation from the Site Supervisor
- Submit a satisfactory internship summary of 3-4 pages (single spaced)
- Complete 300 hours at the internship site

Dual degree students in the Social Work and Student Affairs Administration programs do not register for PAFF-594, their internship requirement is fulfilled through each respective department. Dual degree students
in these programs, however, will be required to submit an MOU and fulfill all other requirements as outlined above since the student’s capstone project will be based on the completed internship experience.

The intern must complete the capstone project after the conclusion of the internship. During capstone, the student will address an organizational problem he or she has identified in cooperation with the site supervisor during the internship period. If there is a transition period of one semester or more between the time of the internship completion date and the student’s enrollment in the capstone seminar, the student is expected to maintain contact with the site supervisor.

**Waivers**

Waivers are granted at the time of admission. To be considered for a waiver of the internship requirement, applicants must show that they possess at least three years of full-time professional work experience in a public and/or nonprofit organization where their responsibilities included some of the following tasks:

- Supervising a program or department
- Strategic planning
- Grant writing
- Facilities management
- Program design, implementation, evaluation
- Organizational development and management
- Financial management and/or long-range financial planning
- Information technology
- Organization, analysis, and evaluation of information
- Acquisition of resources

All students are required to complete a capstone project, regardless of whether they receive an internship waiver. Any student who has received an internship waiver must obtain organizational approval for his/her capstone project site at least one semester prior to taking PAFF-591 (Problem Definition). In the event that a student is not able to receive organizational approval for a capstone project site, the MPA program will require the student to complete an internship.

**International Students**

International students with F-1 Visas are required to secure an offer letter from their internship site supervisor and submit a completed Curricular Practical Training (CPT) form to the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS). Proof of filing the CPT form is required before the department will register international students. **International 3-2 students must identify an internship site several months before beginning their internship.** Because the internship is taken between the completion of the undergraduate and graduate degrees, 3-2 international students must apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) several months in advance.

International students with J-1 Visas are not required to submit a CPT form, but must adhere to different requirements to legally complete their internship in the U.S. Please see the department’s Internship Coordinator or contact the office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) for more information. Guidelines to help ensure international students are meeting requirements can be found on pages 12 and 13 of this handbook.
MPA PROGRAM
INTERNSHIP/CAPSTONE CHECKLIST

THE SEMESTER BEFORE YOUR INTERNSHIP

☐ Attend general informational internship meeting. This is REQUIRED.
☐ Search for possible placements (for competitive internships, begin search 2 semesters in advance)
☐ Contact possible placement sites by phone, in person, or through application (as required)
☐ Interview at potential placement sites
☐ Meet with Internship Coordinator at least once prior to final decision
☐ Decide on internship placement
☐ Meet with Internship Site Supervisor to develop Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
☐ Submit draft MOU to Internship Coordinator, then obtain a final signed copy after completing revisions
☐ The Internship Coordinator is the last person to sign the MOU

DURING THE INTERNSHIP SEMESTER

☐ Download internship forms from MPA website
☐ Keep a journal or log of internship experience (recommendation)
☐ Check in with Site Supervisor occasionally regarding your progress and his/her expectations
☐ Inform Site Supervisor and Internship Coordinator if difficulties arise
☐ Provide Site Supervisor with mid-semester assessment in preparation of Coordinator’s contact
☐ Discuss ideas with Site Supervisor about the organizational problem to be addressed by the Capstone project
☐ Provide Site Supervisor with end of semester evaluation form 2 weeks before end of internship and meet with Site Supervisor at end of internship for final performance appraisal
☐ Complete internship summary and reflection (3 -4 pages, single spaced)
☐ Verify with Internship Coordinator that all materials have been received and all requirements met
☐ If taking Capstone in semester after internship, finalize the organizational problem that will be addressed by the Capstone Project with Site Supervisor and Capstone Instructor and register for PAFF-591 (Problem Definition)

☐ If there is a lag time between the end of your internship and the semester that you are enrolled in the Capstone Seminar, maintain communication with Site Supervisor and continue to discuss ideas for the Capstone Project

DURING THE CAPSTONE PROJECT SEMESTER

☐ Request that the Capstone Seminar Instructor enroll you in PAFF 595: The Capstone Seminar
☐ Complete the Capstone Committee Form and have it signed by your Site Supervisor and faculty committee members
☐ Schedule times with the Site Supervisor and faculty committee members to discuss Capstone progress on a regular basis; submit Capstone drafts to Site Supervisor and faculty committee members and solicit feedback
☐ Present Capstone (with Site Supervisor and faculty committee members present)
MPA INTERNSHIP/CAPSTONE PROJECT

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

[Instructions: Intern must develop the MOU with their Site Supervisor and Internship Coordinator, obtain their signatures, and submit completed MOU to the Coordinator before beginning their internship.]

Date:

To: [Name and Title of Site Supervisor of Internship at Cooperating Organization]

From: [Name of Student]

Re: [Memorandum of Understanding for PAFF 594, Master of Public Administration Internship]

Elements to include:

- Name, title and full contact information of immediate supervisor, student, and Internship Coordinator—including phone numbers (cell, if available), addresses, and e-mail addresses
- A statement that the required internship period must be at least 300 hours of service with specific start and end dates
- Work conditions: hours and days of work, semester of internship course enrollment, location of internship, student’s own responsibility for transportation to and from internship site, other work conditions as appropriate
- Compensation information: hourly rate or total amount and method of payment (weekly, biweekly, lump sum, etc.) or statement that there will be no financial compensation
- Academic goals and expectations of internship
- Specific projects and task descriptions
- Administrative functions in which intern will be engaged (e.g., program development, evaluation or implementation; policy development or analysis; financial review; strategic planning)
- Expected work products or outcomes (include dates, if possible)
Site Information

- Other terms and conditions required by the organization or the student (e.g., health screening, criminal record clearance)
- Special circumstances, risks to the student, or additional requirements (e.g., exposure to dangerous environments)
- If student is covered by the organization’s liability insurance
- Policies and procedures that may be relevant for the intern (e.g., building security, parking, confidentiality)
- Additional organization supervisor(s) and contact information (if more than one works with student and if primary site supervisor is not available)

Must include the following section, as written

Agreements:

The student intern agrees to conduct him/herself as an ethical professional and perform the assigned duties to the best of his/her abilities. The intern will not engage in any activity, including accessing confidential information or the collection of data, without the permission of the site supervisor. S/he will respect the confidentiality of all organizational and client information provided by the agency and will not share it with persons outside the agency without permission. The student will meet the time requirements and notify the supervisor in advance if unable to come during the agreed upon hours. The intern agrees to immediately notify the supervisor if problems arise during the performance of his/her duties at the agency. If problems cannot be resolved with the site supervisor within a reasonable period of time, the student will notify the internship coordinator.

The site supervisor agrees to willingly provide guided supervision during the internship period and oversee the capstone project. In the case that the supervisor leaves the agency, s/he is responsible for identifying a replacement supervisor to fulfill the commitment. The site supervisor agrees to provide an ethical work environment that is free from harassment and discrimination and will address issues immediately, should they arise. The supervisor will engage the student in projects and tasks that are administrative in nature. The intern will not be expected to provide secretarial support, direct services to clients or the public, transport others, or supervise minor children or vulnerable populations. The supervisor will meet regularly with the student to provide feedback on his/her progress on projects, areas of growth, and to review responsibilities.
S/he will provide the student with access to adequate information, assistance, and staff cooperation to enable the student to fulfill his/her assigned responsibilities and capstone project. The supervisor will verify that the student’s time and task completion are documented. The supervisor agrees to complete a verbal mid-semester assessment with the internship coordinator and a final written evaluation (found on MPA website). S/he will also meet with the intern to provide a final performance appraisal. If, during the course of the internship or completion of the capstone project, an issue arises that cannot be resolved by the site supervisor or in the case that the student intern’s performance does not meet expectations, the supervisor will contact the internship coordinator or capstone instructor (depending on the stage of engagement).

**The internship coordinator** agrees to provide consultation to both the student intern and site supervisor, as needed, throughout the semester. S/he will help resolve issues, answer questions, and provide support, as needed. The coordinator will conduct a mid-semester assessment of student performance with the site supervisor. S/he will periodically contact the student for updates or to address problems as they arise. After the successful completion of the internship the coordinator will assign a pass/fail grade based on the final evaluation provided by the supervisor and the internship summary submitted by the student.

Signatures:

____________________________   _____________________________   ________________________
Student/Date                     Site Supervisor/Date               Internship Coordinator/Date

Distribution:

*Participating Organization*

*Student*

*Internship Coordinator, Master of Public Administration Program, Binghamton University, P.O. Box 6000, Binghamton, NY 13902-6000*
Summary of Internship

The final requirement of the internship is to complete a 3-4 page, single-spaced, memorandum that summarizes your internship activities and provides reflections on their relevance to your MPA coursework.

It should describe how you have demonstrated the professional and core competencies expected of MPA students, such as communication and application of analytical skills to solve problems (outlined on the final intern evaluation form). In particular, you should explain how you were able to:

- Integrate public administration theory and knowledge into practice through the internship experience, illustrating with specific examples
- Discuss any insights you gained and areas of new learning
- Present challenges and how they were addressed
- Describe the “fit” of the internship with your interests and anticipated career direction
- Propose how the internship has led to the development of your capstone project topic
MPA Internship
Final Intern Evaluation

Intern Name_______________________________________ Date_____________________
Site Supervisor_________________________________       Agency__________________________________

Total # of hours Completed_____________________

Instructions: Please use this form to evaluate the performance of the student intern you supervised over the last semester. The questions ask you to assess the student in the competency areas that are core to the MPA program: professional conduct, communication, integration of public administration theory into practice, and application of analytical skills to solve problems. This evaluation is used to conduct the student’s overall course assessment and must be submitted in order for the student to receive a grade. Please share your assessment with the student during the final performance evaluation session.

Professional Conduct: Using the rating scale below, please indicate the degree of competence the student has demonstrated in each skill area during the internship experience.

1 = No apparent competence
2 = A small degree of competence
3 = A moderate degree of competence
4 = A significant degree of competence
5 = Full competence
NA = I have no basis on which to judge

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<tr>
<th>Intern’s Professional Conduct</th>
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<td>Demonstrated strong work ethic</td>
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<td>Was punctual and reliable</td>
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<td>Showed initiative and enthusiasm</td>
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<td>Was willing to learn</td>
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<td>Completed tasks on time</td>
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<td>Worked well with other staff in office</td>
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<td>Worked effectively on teams</td>
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<td>Demonstrated cultural competence</td>
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<td>Worked well independently</td>
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<td>Followed through with all tasks</td>
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<td>Took responsibility for problems and worked effectively toward solutions</td>
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<td>Demonstrated effective time management</td>
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<td>Worked effectively within the organizational structure</td>
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<td>Completed all assignments identified in the MOU</td>
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<td>Came well-prepared with skills/knowledge from course work</td>
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MPA Core Competencies: Using the rating scale below, please indicate the degree of competence the student has demonstrated for each of the skills.

1 = No apparent competence  
2 = A small degree of competence  
3 = A moderate degree of competence  
4 = A significant degree of competence  
5 = Full competence  
NA = I have no basis on which to judge

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<td>Writes clear and concise communications</td>
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<td>Organizes thought and evidence in a logical sequence</td>
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<td>Articulates ideas well</td>
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<td>Communicates at a level appropriate for the intended audience</td>
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<td>Communicates well through formal presentations</td>
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<td>Conducts a thorough literature review</td>
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<td>Effectively applies research/theory to public problems</td>
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<td>Understands and interprets trends and debates in administration</td>
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<td>Develops clear problem statements</td>
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<td>Gathers information from a variety of sources</td>
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<td>Distinguishes between sources of information on the basis of quality</td>
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<td>Identifies and applies appropriate analytical techniques</td>
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<td>Interprets results effectively</td>
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<td>Prepares appropriate graphical representations of data</td>
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Were you adequately informed of your responsibilities regarding this internship?  _____yes  _____no

Were you satisfied with the communications with and responsiveness of the department staff/faculty?  
_____yes  _____no

Additional Comments:

____________________________________________________________________________________

(Site Supervisor Signature)          (Date)          (Internship Coord. Signature)          (Date)

Submit this completed evaluation form by FAX to (607) 777-2414 OR by mail to:
MPA Internship Coordinator
Dept. of Public Administration
CCPA, PO Box 6000
Binghamton University
Binghamton, NY  13902-6000

Thank you
The regulations that govern students in F-1 or J-1 status (see reverse of this form) require these students to receive authorization to engage in an internship, field placement or practicum before the student begins the activity. Under the regulations, any of these activities is considered employment regardless of the word used to describe the activity. This authorization is required even when a student is required to do an internship, field placement or practicum as part of a degree program.

When you have been offered an internship placement, follow the steps below based on the type of Visa you are holding. Failure to complete the required documents may result in revocation of your visa status and serious personal consequences for you.

**F-1 Visa**

- Ask your internship or field placement supervisor to write an offer letter on their business’s letterhead. The letter should state the terms of your internship: starting and ending dates, number of hours per week you will be working, location of the internship, and brief description of duties.

- Complete a Curricular Practical Training (CPT) form, available at the office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS). (The ISSS Office is located in the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center, Room G-1), or on the ISSS website ([http://www2.binghamton.edu/isss/employment/CPTAdvForm.pdf](http://www2.binghamton.edu/isss/employment/CPTAdvForm.pdf)). This form requires information and a signature from your academic advisor.

- Submit the official internship offer letter and the completed CPT form to ISSS main office.

- Within 7 to 10 business days, ISSS staff will let you know if your paperwork has been accepted and approved. You will receive an I-20 with your CPT employment endorsed on page 3. **You cannot begin your employment until you have the I-20 with the endorsement in hand.**
J-1 Visa

☐ When the internship offer is finalized, ask your internship coordinator to write a letter to your sponsor explaining the purpose of the placement, dates, contact information, and include that the internship is a requirement of the program.

☐ If your J-1 sponsor is Binghamton University, complete an Academic Training Recommendation Form available at the office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS). (The ISSS Office is located in the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center, Room G-1), or on the ISSS website (http://www2.binghamton.edu/issss/essential-forms/Train_Form.pdf). This form requires information and a signature from your academic advisor.

☐ If your J-1 sponsor is an organization other than Binghamton University, contact your J-1 advisor at the organization that manages your DS-2019 form for information on how to have your academic training approved.

Once the sponsor receives this letter, he/she will write an authorization letter to the internship site supervisor, which will allow the student to do the internship. The student will also need to submit a new DS-2019 form to accompany the letter. Both are required in order for the student to begin the internship.

Please remember!

1. You may not begin working at your internship site until your application forms have been submitted and approved by the ISSS.
2. You will receive a new I-20 or DS-2019 that has a notation granting the approval.
3. You must possess the new I-20 or DS-2019 document before you begin your internship.

Any questions regarding internships or any other kind of employment for F-1 or J-1 students may be sent to the Employment Team in the ISSS: intl.work@binghamton.edu You can also set up an appointment with an international student advisor at the ISSS, by calling the ISSS office at 1-607-777-2510.

To learn more about these regulations you can view webcasts numbers 4 and 5 on the International Student and Scholar Services website: http://www2.binghamton.edu/issss/employment/empWebinar.html
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How do I get started with an internship?

A: The first step to getting started with the internship is to meet with the Internship Coordinator as early as possible. There are mandatory internship workshops each spring and fall. Pay attention to announcements and be sure to attend a workshop. Students should also carefully review the information presented on the MPA website. Print out the checklist for guidance.

Q: Why can't students directly register for PAFF 594 or 595 on their own?

A: PAFF 594 and 595 require instructor permission for registration. Students must consult with the Internship Coordinator for PAFF 594 (Internship) and the Capstone Instructor for PAFF 595 (Capstone) to determine readiness for participation.

Q: What types of work are students expected to do during their internships?

A: As a professional-in-training, an intern is expected to work on managerial/administrative activities. These might include developing programs, evaluation strategies, budgets, new procedures, etc. Obviously, since the student is not a professional employee of the organization, s/he works closely with the supervisor on all projects. The intern should not engage in direct services to clients, transporting others, perform office duties (to a great extent), manual or unskilled labor.

Q: I currently work full-time and do not have time to complete a 300-hour internship in addition to my job, so how do I meet that requirement?

A: Students are often able to complete the internship requirement during their normal working hours at their place of employment. You should meet with the Internship Coordinator to discuss your particular situation.

Q: What is the difference between a master's thesis and Capstone project?

A: The primary difference between the two is that a capstone is an applied research project. That means it focuses on a specific problem an organization faces. The goal of the capstone is to conduct a critical analysis that will generate actionable recommendations for the organization. A master's thesis, in contrast, focuses more on the development of new knowledge in an individual's field of study through research. See the Capstone Workshop presentation for more information.

Q: What happens if my site supervisor leaves the organization during my internship or capstone?

A: First, do not panic! Once you are informed that s/he will be leaving and a new supervisor is identified, have a meeting with both your current and new supervisor to ensure continuity. Provide copies of all past paperwork, products, and important information to the new person. Try to include this new person in all activities, or at least keep him/her informed until the change takes place. If the change is sudden, work with the administrator at the next higher level to identify an appropriate supervisor and proceed as described.
above. Be sure to notify your MPA Department advisor immediately.

Q: How can I ensure that the organization stays interested in my work if there is a one or two semester break between my internship and capstone project class?

A: Maintaining that relationship is critical to achieve the cooperation that will lead to the successful completion of your capstone project. Be sure to communicate with your site supervisor at least once a month to stay up to date on the current focus of the organization and to discuss your capstone topic. On a very practical level, it is important to keep in mind that priorities can shift quickly as organizations respond to current issues and challenges. You may also need to modify your topic to accommodate a more pressing organizational concern. Remember that your internship and capstone project should provide mutual growth and benefit to both you and the cooperating organization.

Q: I have completed the 300 hours of my internship. What requirements do I need to have on file to get a grade of satisfactory?

A: Type and submit a 3–4 page, single-spaced, memo giving a summary of your internship, along with the Final Intern Evaluation Form from the Site Supervisor.

Q: Do I have to get any University approvals before collecting data for my site supervisor?

A: It depends on what you are gathering and from whom. If you are collecting information from clients, employees or other human subjects and you expect to use the data for your capstone project, then you will need to seek approval from the Binghamton University Human Subjects Review Committee. You will need to contact the Internship Coordinator first, as she will be the supervising faculty member for the project.