

Virginia Commonwealth University
Forensic Science Department:

FRSC 793 Internship
Policies & Procedures

Course Description:

Semester course; variable laboratory hours. 1-3 credits. 100 hours of laboratory work per credit. 3 credits or 300 hours of laboratory work required for graduation. Students must apply to the program director for this internship a semester in advance. Students conduct replication, validation or other analyses in a specialization area of interest in a laboratory and gain practical experience in crime laboratory practices and methods. The product of this experience will be presentations at a campus seminar and/or professional conference, and a written report. This capstone course should be taken near the end of the degree program.

1. General information

- a) Students must have achieved an overall GPA of 3.0 (“B”) in his/her graduate study at VCU in order to enroll in FRSC 793.
- b) 3 credits of Internship will be required and only 3 credits of Internship will be accepted toward the 36 required credits for graduation.
- c) Students may register for an additional 1-2 credits (not to exceed 5 total credits) of Internship for completion of their initial proposed project. This will require the permission of the mentor and the Graduate Director. If permission is requested *after* the “FRSC 793: Internship Request Form” has been submitted, a “FRSC 793: Request for Additional Credits” form must be completed and turned in. However, requests for additional credits will not be considered after the student has a scheduled internship seminar date/time.
- d) A minimum of 300 hours of supervised laboratory work that includes an independent research project is required in order to receive 3 credits. If additional credits are requested, another 100 hours of supervised laboratory work is required for each additional credit.
- e) In addition, students are required to complete extensive shadowing of an examiner in their discipline or section of interest. This shadowing shall include observing how typical samples are received, processed through the laboratory, and how data is analyzed and reported. Though not required, students are also encouraged to view testimony of an examiner if/when possible.
 - Students working in faculty research laboratories (on campus) should consult with the Graduate Director to arrange shadowing experience.
- f) With the written permission of the laboratory supervisor/mentor and Graduate Director, students may complete FRSC 793 Internship credits over two semesters by enrolling in 1-3 credits each semester. A letter grade will not be assigned until all FRSC 793 credits and requirements (seminar, paper) are completed.
- g) An honorarium may be provided to Internship mentors/supervisors from the VA Department of Forensic Science. A stipend to cover laboratory expenses and supplies may be supplied to on-campus Internship supervisors who are current VCU full-time faculty members.

- DFS mentors and VCU faculty will receive only one honorarium/stipend per project; the honorarium amount is not related to the total number of registered credits.
 - No honorariums or stipends will be provided for Internships that are completed at other universities or private companies.
- h) Failing to follow all policies or meet all requirements specified in this document, including deadlines, will result in the lowering of the final grade by one letter grade. Enforcement of this policy will be at the discretion of the Graduate Director after consultation with the internship supervisor/mentor.

2. Enrollment procedure

- a) In the semester prior to enrollment in FRSC 793, the student should identify an internship supervisor with whom he/she will conduct the internship and agree on a general project.
- Projects must have a valid original research component.
- b) Request Form: Students should complete the “FRSC 793: Internship Request Form”, sign it, obtain the Committee members’ signatures (3), and deliver it to the Graduate Director for his/her signature.
- The committee must include the laboratory supervisor or mentor, one VCU Forensic Science faculty member, and one additional forensic science professional familiar with the discipline of interest.
 - The “FRSC 793: Internship Request Form” must be completed and on file with the Graduate Director 2 weeks prior to the last day of classes in the semester *preceding* desired enrollment.
 - All projects and Request Forms must be approved by the Graduate Director
 - Internship Request Forms for students wishing to enroll in summer or fall internships are due two weeks prior to the end of classes in the preceding *spring* semester.
 - Internship Request Forms for students wishing to enroll in spring internships are due two weeks prior to the end of classes in the preceding *fall* semester.
 - Internship requests not submitted by the stated deadlines will be denied and the student will be dropped from the course the following Monday.
 - Internships completed at VA-DFS laboratories must be approved by the Director of Technical Services; in this case, this signature should also be obtained prior to final delivery to the Graduate Director.
 - VA-DFS requires interns to complete the state application form (available online), confidentiality statement, and other paperwork. Please inquire with your mentor before beginning internship. All paperwork must be completed and on file prior to beginning in the laboratory.
 - Internships completed at other agencies outside of VCU may require lengthy application processes and/or background checks before students can begin working in the laboratory. Students are responsible for inquiring about these policies and following all agency guidelines regarding these issues.

- c) Proposal: By the end of the third week of the semester in which the student is enrolled for the Internship (fall, summer, or spring) a proposal must be submitted to the Graduate Director for approval.
- Students should work with the laboratory supervisor/mentor and other committee members to obtain their approval of the proposal *prior* to submitting it to the Graduate Director.
 - Students who fail to meet this deadline will be dropped from the course the following Monday.
 - The 4-6 page proposal details the work in which the student will be engaged and should include
 1. An introduction providing overview and relevant background information
 2. Specific goals and objectives of the proposed work
 3. A description of the methods and materials to be used, including number of samples and origin, number of replicates, instrumentation to be used, and data analysis
 4. A description of how your work will impact or advance the field or laboratory
 5. A week-by-week time table for the conduct and completion of the work
 6. Appropriate references
 - Mentors and other committee members should review the proposal and sign it (indicating they have received and reviewed) prior to submission to the Graduate Director. The signed hardcopy should be delivered to the Graduate Director for final approval.

3. Requirements for completion of the internship

- a) Students are required to meet (either individually or as a group) with their committee members at least once during the semester of enrollment.
- The purpose of this meeting will be to update the committee on progress of proposed project, ask questions, seek advice, address concerns, and provide a timetable for completion of project, report, and seminar.
 - At this meeting (or before), the committee members must agree upon the format and content of the shadowing experience that shall be required of the student.
 - This committee meeting should be held at or around the halfway point in the semester of enrollment and should occur no later than 4 weeks prior to the end of the semester of enrollment. Planning of this meeting is the burden of the student.
 - Documentation from this meeting should be submitted to the Graduate Director. Documentation should be signed by the supervisor/mentor.
- b) Unless otherwise agreed upon by the committee, a *complete, near final draft* of the written report must be submitted to all committee members *no later* than two calendar weeks prior to the scheduled student seminar *or* the last day of classes for the semester of enrollment (*whichever comes first*).
- During this period, the student is required to work with the committee members to make recommended changes/edits to the paper.

- The *final report* with edits completed must be submitted to the committee no later than 48 hours prior to seminar date. The final report submitted *at that time* will be used to assess a final grade for the student Internship.
- The format and contents of the written report should follow the style of a journal manuscript. For additional guidance, see attached “FRSC 793: Internship Report Guidelines” and/or a forensic science journal from your discipline. The committee should be informed of which journal format is followed.
- At minimum, the report should be 15 pages. Figures/tables/charts, references, and appendices will **not** count towards this minimum page requirement.
- At minimum, the report should include:
 1. A title page that includes the students name and semester of enrollment along with the names of all committee members.
 2. An abstract not exceeding 400 words. Abstracts should be submitted on a separate page, just after the title page.
 3. An introduction providing background information and the goals and/or objectives of the work.
 4. A research methods section describing the methods and techniques used.
 5. A research results section detailing the results of the work. This should include reference to data that is displayed in the form of figures, charts, and tables.
 6. A discussion/conclusion section detailing the major discussion points and conclusions of the research completed.
 7. References (literature cited).
 8. Critical data should be displayed in figures, charts, or tables. Each should be displayed on a separate page and attached at the end sequentially (in the order of reference) at the end of the paper. Figures and charts should include a figure legend.
 9. An appendix should be attached that describes the shadowing experience and/or any other Internship experiences not directly related to the research project completed.
- Students will be encouraged to publish the results of their research.

c) Each intern must present their research project at a campus seminar.

- The seminar presentation will be for approximately 40-45 minutes with an additional 10 minutes for questions.
- This seminar *may or may not* be completed in the FRSC 570 Forensic Science Seminar Series depending upon scheduling and availability. If no FRSC 570 slots are available, students are to make arrangements for a seminar through the Departmental administrative assistant and/or their mentor.
- All committee members must be present for evaluation of the seminar or available over videoconferencing. If neither scenario is possible, the seminar may be recorded for viewing/evaluation of the seminar at a later date.
- Students are encouraged to review and practice their presentation with their Internship supervisor prior to the date of the seminar.
- After submission of the completed “FRSC 793: Internship Request Form”, a seminar date should be scheduled with the FRSC 570 Instructor, the Mentor, or the Departmental Admin. Assistant.

- Summer interns will complete their seminars early in the following fall semester; fall and spring interns will complete their seminars late in the semester of enrollment.
 - All forensic science Master's students will be invited to attend the presentation, as well as interested faculty and DFS staff.
 - Committee's are encouraged to meet just following the seminar to ask questions of the student and to complete evaluation of the student.
 - Students are encouraged to present their research at a professional meeting.
- d) Many agencies and private companies require lengthy review and approval of presentations and reports that are based on data acquired at that agency. In those agencies/companies, this is generally required prior to that data being discussed or presented. Students should be aware of and carefully follow all agency/company guidelines regarding these issues.
- e) All policies and deadlines specified herein are subject to enforcement per policy dictated in *I.h* on page 1 of this document.

4. Grading of Internship

- a) The Internship committee of three, including the Internship supervisor/mentor, will assign a final letter grade for the Internship upon completion of the seminar. For this purpose, the committee will be required to meet at least once upon completion of the seminar. Committee's are encouraged to meet just following the seminar to ask questions of the student and to complete evaluation & grading of the student.
- b) Each committee member will complete written evaluations of the written report and seminar. In addition, the internship supervisor/mentor will complete a written evaluation of the intern's laboratory performance. Evaluation forms should be provided to the committee members by the student.
- c) The final grade will be determined based on the intern's laboratory performance (50%), written report (25%) and oral presentation (25%). Students must receive a final average grade of "B" or higher to receive pass this course requirement.
- d) The internship supervisor/mentor will conduct the final committee meeting, compile the evaluations, assign a final grade, and report the final grade to the Graduate Director. The grade should be submitted in writing (email is preferred).
- e) The grade, hardcopies of the paper and presentation, *and* copies of all evaluation forms must be submitted to the Graduate Director no later than 2 weeks prior to the end of the semester of enrollment or the semester of the seminar, which ever comes last.
- f) A grade of "I" will be submitted for those students who have completed the semester of enrollment but not yet completed all requirements. Upon completion of the requirements and receipt of all required documents, the grade will be changed to the grade assigned by the supervisor/mentor. *Note:* If the requirements are not met and grade finalized by the last day of classes in the next term (after enrollment), the grade of "I" will be automatically converted to a failing grade.