



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Davis College

Agricultural Education & Communications™

Agricultural Communications Internship (ACOM 4000) Manual

Updated August 2022

Internship Manual Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Internship Requirements	2
What is an Internship?	3
Internship for Credit	3
Short Term Experience	3
Enrolling in ACOM 4000	4
Hours of Work Per Week	4
Credit Hour Eligibility	4
Communication with Internship Instructor	4
Professionalism	6
Making the Most of Your Internship	6
Required Assignments & Evaluations	8
Frequently Asked Questions	14
Still have a question?	15
Change Variable Credit Hours	16

Introduction

Internships are one of the most valuable learning experiences you can have during your collegiate career. During your internship, you will gain real-world experience in the specific area of agricultural communications that interests you most. In this manual you will find all the necessary forms and details that must be reviewed and completed prior, during, and after your internship.

Please review this content carefully. Within the agricultural communications discipline, there are many diverse internship opportunities. However, each ACOM student enrolled in internship credit hours is expected to complete the same course requirements.

Getting an Internship

The most important thing about finding an internship is to find one that interests *you* and applies to *your career goals*. Dr. Irlbeck forwards every internship notification she receives; however, students are allowed to find internships on their own. Also, if you know of a career or company you are interested in, or if you have a contact somewhere, call them and ask if they would host an intern for a semester. Many students have interned for supervisors that have not hosted a student previously.

When should I intern?

Any time! The Department of Agricultural Education & Communications does not have a requirement as to when a student must complete an internship. However, a student must complete at least one, three-credit hour internship to graduate. Students may complete up to nine hours of internship credit, should they choose. Always be searching for internship opportunities and be sure to read all of Dr. Irlbeck's emails for an internship that could interest you. If you see or hear of an opportunity that fits your interests, apply!

Internship Requirements

- Your internship must be a legitimate communications internship, which means the majority of your time should be dedicated to communications work. If you are not sure what constitutes a legitimate internship, please visit with your academic adviser.
- Your internship cannot be with a member of your family.
 - Family is defined by the Texas Tech Operating Policy as a spouse, parents, siblings, grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and/or in-laws.
- You must enroll in ACOM 4000-001 (or ACOM 4000-051 for out-of-state internships) to receive internship credit. Please see the ENROLLING IN ACOM 4000 section below for more details.
- Students must work at the internship in the semester they are receiving credit
- Students cannot miss class to perform internship responsibilities, unless it is an exceptional activity (i.e. a national convention, event with a renowned speaker)
- Both paid and unpaid internships are acceptable for ACOM 4000 credit
- To receive credit, internships must be at least eight weeks long and you must work a minimum of 10 hours per week. More weeks and hours can always be worked.
- You must complete the online internship contract and write your initial reflection prior to starting your internship.
- Your supervisor needs to complete the supervisor's form. This is an online form that will be emailed prior to the first day of class.

- Your supervisor must complete an internship evaluation before the end of the semester when you are enrolled in internship credit.
 - This evaluation will be a web-based survey sent to your supervisor by the internship instructor. You will not receive credit until your supervisor completes the survey.
- Your final project will include the digital (video) presentation or a written reflection AND an online portfolio of your work during the internship. Failure to complete your final project may result in failure of the class.

What is an Internship?

An internship is a hands-on learning experience to enhance what you have learned in the classroom. In an internship situation, students are placed in a real-world situation and are expected to perform as an employee of the hosting organization while learning professional and communications skills.

Some internships are paid, others are not; paid and unpaid internships are both acceptable for course credit. Lots of students complete multiple internships throughout their college careers. Some receive credit for more than one internship, others choose to receive credit for only one internship.

Often, employers label a part time job, freelance work, volunteerism, or a short-term experience as an internship. Although these are usually great résumé, confidence, and skill builders, they might not be eligible for course credit. This table will help clear up the confusion.

Internship for Credit	Short Term Experience
At least eight weeks long, most likely a full semester	Less than eight weeks
Minimum of 10 hours per week	A few hours a week
Communications focused, such as writing, videography, or public relations	Communications are a small part of the responsibilities
Responsibilities enhance and compliment your classwork	Student misses a significant amount of class for work
Plans and manages communications, writes content, helps make decisions, shoot & edit a substantial amount of photos or videos	Posts to social a few times a week, takes a few photos, helps edit one video

Competencies Expected

Beyond the requirement of your ACOM 4000 coursework, students are expected to grow in their communications competencies, depending on the nature of the internship. For example, if the student interns at a television station, the student would be expected to demonstrate significant growth in video shooting and editing, writing for broadcast, and speed of writing. In another example, if a student participated in a government internship, demonstrated growth in interpersonal communications skills, business communications skills, and legislative knowledge would be expected.

Additionally, we expect our interns to develop into productive professionals. We understand that early in your college careers, most of you have not worked in an office-type setting. The

internship program is to help you understand the various nuances of a workplace, how they operate, the professional expectations, and the organization's culture. Soak all these things in, learn and grow from them, and share these things with your fellow agricultural communications students.

Enrolling in ACOM 4000

As discussed above, students must enroll in ACOM 4000 during the semester when they are completing the internship to receive credit for participation in an internship. The ACOM degree program requires all students complete at minimum of three (3) internship credit hours before they can graduate.

Semester credit hour enrollment shall be commensurate with length and time of the internship. The student should negotiate this with his or her academic adviser. The table below is the department's agreed upon guideline for internship credit hours.

Hours of Work Per Week	Credit Hour Eligibility
Fewer than 10 hours a week	Not eligible for internship credit
10-35 hours a week	Three to five credit hours
35 or more hours a week	Five or six credit hours.

Note: These are generalized numbers. The student's academic adviser has the final say in how many credit hours the student needs; each student's degree plan and academic credit hour needs are different.

Variable Credit Hours

ACOM 4000 is a variable credit hour course. This means you must MANUALLY change the number of hours you will be enrolling in for the semester. Please review APPENDIX A for instructions on changing variable credit hours. The student is responsible for changing these credit hours before the semester begins. Academic advisers and the internship instructor are unable to alter a student's schedule.

In-state and Out-of-state ACOM 4000 Sections

There are two sections for ACOM 4000: 001 is the in-state section and 051 is the out-of-state section. If you are completing an internship anywhere in the state of Texas, you will enroll in Section 001. If your internship requires you to leave Texas for the duration of your internship (e.g., a Congressional internship in Washington, D.C.), you will enroll in Section 051.

Communication with Internship Instructor

While enrolled in ACOM 4000, you will receive regular communication from the course instructor, Dr. Erica Irlbeck. This communication will be in the form of emails or Blackboard correspondence. It is your responsibility as a student to regularly check your email and Blackboard for updates related to the course.

If you have questions regarding your internship, please first refer to this document, then the course Blackboard page, and internship FAQs (found on Blackboard and in this document). If your question has not been answered, please contact the internship course instructor via email for further assistance.

Please note: If you are only enrolled in one credit hour of internship, you will probably receive an email from the internship instructor. Know that this is a friendly reminder as your number of credit hours is determined by your academic adviser – not the internship instructor.

Internship Instructor Contact Information

Dr. Erica Irlbeck
Professor of Agricultural Communications
Texas Tech University
Department of Agricultural Education & Communications
Room 207B
Box 42131, Lubbock, Texas 79404-2131
806-834-6708
Erica.irlbeck@ttu.edu

Professionalism

You are representing the Department of Agricultural Education and Communications, the Davis College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, Texas Tech University, and most importantly, **yourself** during your internship. Please represent all these entities with the utmost pride and professionalism.

Your time at your internship will be spent applying and developing skills and abilities relative to your degree and career plans. This is YOUR internship and your chance to shine for a potential employer. You will be on time for work, dress appropriately, and contact both the employer and your faculty adviser when problems arise.

Before you begin and during your internship, please adhere to this professionalism checklist

- Google yourself – Many employers will do their homework on you.
- Check your social media accounts for any comments or pictures that could harm your reputation.
- Order a free credit report from Equifax, Experian, or TransUnion.
- Make sure your outgoing message on your voice mail sounds professional.
- Use your TTU email for professional correspondence.
- Be aware many employers will require a drug test.
- Know that internet information is cached and can be found after you have removed it.

Making the Most of Your Internship

Your First Week

Your organization may offer a formal orientation or may show you around and make introductions. Take advantage of this opportunity to get to know more about the company.

Although some organizations may not offer an orientation, you should observe the following:

- How do people dress?
- Are they formal or informal when they approach each other?
- How do people communicate? (email, phone, in person, internal message system)
- What are their work habits?
- Does your supervisor work through lunch and then stay late? Is this expected of everyone?

During your first week, expect to be introduced to the top officials, meet other interns, learn about the history and mission of the organization, and review organizational policies, such as absenteeism, use of property, sexual harassment, safety practices, dress codes, and specific policies. It is highly recommended you read about the organization in advance to find out about the history and the mission. Ask to attend meetings with departments and have a tour. Arrange to meet key people in the organization. Take advantage of workshops or seminars. Remember, it is your responsibility to get the most out of this experience. Some internship supervisors are hands-off and expect you to take ownership of your experience. If this is the case, take it upon yourself to meet people, ask questions, get involved in projects, and make the most of your internship.

Tips for a Successful Internship

- Listen more than talk.
- Show respect for all people, backgrounds, points of view, and ideas, even if they are different from what you are accustomed to.

- Show an interest in and commitment to attending organized sessions for interns, if available.
- Always come prepared for work and be early.
- Dress in appropriate professional clothing.
- Show support for colleagues by attending social functions.
- Treat your co-workers as you would like to be treated.
- Always be willing to jump in and help.
- If you don't have anything to do, be observant and find something to be helpful. Come up with a project for yourself.
- Establish credibility by performing your job competently.
- Ask good questions; avoid asking questions about skills that you are expected to know.
- If you have issues with software, Google the issue before you ask your supervisor or co-workers.

Avoid Certain Behaviors

- Criticizing people, policies, or procedures. It is not your place to do so.
- Working on homework from other courses, other school tasks, items that are not work-related, online shopping, or personal social media.
- Spending so much time socializing that you are unable to perform assigned tasks.
- Acting like a know-it-all but failing to demonstrate competence in your area.
- Criticizing your supervisor or going behind his/her back to get something.
- Spending time on your phone.
- Not showing up without notifying your supervisor.
- Complaining.
- Gossiping.

The Basic Work Requirements

- Report when scheduled, every single day.
- Notify your supervisor if you cannot be at work.
- Keep your supervisor informed about what you are working on.
- Take appropriate safety precautions if working around people and equipment.
- If problems arise, you are encouraged to talk directly with the person with whom you have the problem first.
 - If the problem is with a coworker that cannot be resolved, then talk with your site supervisor. You are encouraged to address the issues, come up with solutions, and reach an agreeable resolution. If this cannot happen, then approach your faculty supervisor for advice. Always maintain good communication, respect for others and an understanding of the expectations.

Required Assignments & Evaluations

While you are enrolled in internship credit hours, you are required to complete a set of assignments and evaluations. These assignments and evaluations will be used to assess your performance in your internship. (Please pay attention to formatting guidelines for each assignment. Failure to follow formatting guidelines will result in point deductions.)

A total of 900 points are possible within the internship course.

Deadlines

Because of the diverse nature of the internships, timelines, and enrollment schedules for each student, the deadlines for assignments will follow a different structure than your normal courses. ACOM 4000 follows two sets of deadlines: 1) the second week of the semester, and 2) the last day of class for the semester.

- The internship contract, supervisor's form, and initial expectation narrative are due the second week of class (check Blackboard for the exact date).
- The final reflection (can be a paper or video), portfolio, thank you note, supervisor's evaluation, and end of semester survey are due on the last day of class (check Blackboard for the exact date).

Assignments & Point Values

You will receive a final grade for the enrolled internship credit hours based on the following assignments and evaluations:

1. Internship contract (Online) – 100 points

- This is due the second week of class. See Blackboard for the specific date
- You should complete your internship contract via Qualtrics as soon as you and your internship supervisor have decided on the specifics of your experience. The link to the contract will be distributed via email and provided on Blackboard.
- This assignment is imperative as it shows you have an internship. The internship coordinator will review each contract and reserves the right to question the legitimacy of an internship, the student's listed responsibilities, hours of work, or anything else that does not seem like a true learning experience worthy of course credit.
- The instructor may ask the student to renegotiate the terms of the internship with his or her supervisor, suggest additional responsibilities or working hours, or may even suggest waiting until a later semester to receive course credit.
- If a contract is not received by the stated deadline, the instructor reserves the right to drop the student from the course.

2. Supervisor's form – 25 points

- This is due the second week of class. See Blackboard for the specific date
- Students can send this online form directly to supervisors, or the internship supervisor can do it. A link is on Blackboard.

- This form serves two purposes:
 - It allows the department to keep records of all internship supervisors
 - It asks the supervisors to create a plan for your internship experience.

3. Initial expectation narrative and goals statement – 100 points

- This is due the second week of class. See Blackboard for the specific date
- You are expected to write a narrative (1-2 pages, double-spaced) that details your expectations for your internship. This narrative should be uploaded to Blackboard.
- Your narrative should answer the following questions:
 - What are your specific goals for this internship?
 - What do you hope to accomplish in this internship?
What were your initial reactions to your first few days?
What are you looking forward to?
 - Is there anything you are disappointed about so far?
What do you think is going to be your biggest challenge in your internship?
How does this internship relate to your long-term educational or career goals?
How are you planning to overcome it?
- Narrative formatting guidelines:
 - MS Word Document
 - Narrative must be written in paragraph form; do not use numbered or bulleted lists to answer questions.
 - One to two pages – (Must be at least one full page to receive full credit).
Place your name and the assignment in the header of the document, right aligned. (Example: Jane Doe, Internship Expectation Reflection) – Do NOT include a title or information other than your narrative in the body of the document.
 - One-inch margins, double-spaced
 - Times New Roman, 12-point font

4. Final reflection – 175 points

- This is due the last day of class. See Blackboard for the specific date
- You can choose between a reflective paper OR a video.

Choice 1: Reflective Paper

This assignment is a two-page narrative that details your experiences at your internship. This document should be uploaded to Blackboard by the deadline.

Your narrative should be guided by the following headings:

- Beginning of the semester internship goals
- Progress toward goals
- Internship expectations and realities
- Top five lessons learned
- Biggest three areas of professional growth or change
- New or improved skills
- Most rewarding aspect of the internship
- Most challenging aspect of the internship

- What would you change (in your own behavior, attitude, performance, available opportunities, etc.) if you had the chance to do this internship over again?
- Recommendations for future interns at this location

Paper Formatting Guidelines:

- MS Word Document
- Must be written in paragraph form; do not use numbered or bulleted lists to answer questions.
- Two pages - (Must be two full pages to receive full credit).
- Place your name and the assignment in the header of the document, right aligned. (Example: Jane Doe, Final Internship Reflection)
- One-inch margins, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font

Choice 2: Reflective Video

Students can choose to produce a video about their internship experience. The video should be two- to three-minutes long that details the experiences, key learning opportunities, and major take-aways from their internship.

Your video should address the following information:

- Where did you intern?
- What were your responsibilities?
- What did you learn, and what was your biggest area of growth?
- What was your favorite/most exciting part of your internship?
- What was your least favorite/exciting part of your internship?
- What are your future plans based upon this internship?

There are many options available to produce your video. Students may utilize Adobe Premiere, iMovie, QuickTime, or any video production software. Videos should be high-quality with no pixilation. Videos can be uploaded to YouTube or Vimeo, and then shared (using a link) to Blackboard for grading. Do not upload a video file; do not upload the Premiere project. Only links to files saved to YouTube or a file sharing site will be accepted. The reason for this is Blackboard: it will take you a lot of time to upload the video file to Blackboard, and then it takes the instructor an hour or two to download it. A link is the only acceptable format.

The video must have the following elements:

- Audio voice over narration
- B-roll video and/or still images that visually communicate your internship experiences.
- Video titles and name keys
- Interviews with co-workers (encouraged)

Students will be graded on their effort and attention to detail when producing this final internship video project. It is the student's responsibility to ensure the shared link to the video is working and viewable by the instructor. A working link **MUST** be provided for the student to receive credit for the video. Un-exported Premiere files or other incomplete video projects will **NOT** receive credit. It is the student's responsibility to follow all directions when creating, exporting, and sharing a working link to their video.

5. Digital portfolio – 200 points

- This is due the last day of class. See Blackboard for the specific date.
- As our ACOM program evolves to reflect the digital nature of the agricultural communications industry, we want to also encourage our students to develop their professional digital presence.
- Students will develop and submit an online portfolio rather than turning in a printed and bound internship portfolio.
 - *Many students enrolled in ACOM 4000 will have already developed an online portfolio during your coursework in the ACOM degree plan. It is recommended to add the internship materials to that portfolio for submission in ACOM 4000.*
- During a student's internship, they should collect and archive examples of their work to include a professional portfolio. These work samples in the portfolio should represent the student's best work and overall experience during the internship.

Portfolio Requirements

- Content should include examples of the student's writing, design, photography, web design, social media management, and/or other tangible examples that demonstrate what the student learned during the internship.
 - This can include, but is not limited to, writing samples, published articles in your organization's newsletter or magazine, photography, print materials developed by the intern, letters, presentations, advertisements, and others.
- If your internship was video based, include a YouTube link or embed the video in your website.
- Your portfolio must also include digital assignments you posted to Blackboard including: 1) initial expectations narrative, and 2) internship reflection narrative or video.
- Agricultural communications is a diverse discipline. Therefore, it is understood that no two internship experiences are alike. We purposefully designed the ACOM internship program to be flexible and representative of the diverse nature of our industry. Therefore, it is your responsibility, as the student, to do your part in collecting, documenting, and archiving as many examples of your internship work experience as possible.
 - In instances when your internship may not allow you to keep or post documents, as often seen with governmental internships, get creative. Interview a co-worker about their job responsibilities, write a narrative about a specific policy or issue that is of interest to you and your career goals, or produce a video about the organization or entity where you are employed. **Simply saying you "couldn't keep anything" from your internship is not acceptable.**
- This internship portfolio is meant for you to create and have something that will be of use to you as you seek out full-time employment after graduation. Make this something you'll be proud of!
- ***ALL students must submit an online portfolio. No exceptions, meaning print/PDF portfolios are not allowed.***

6. Thank you note to supervisor – 50 points

- This is due the last day of class. See Blackboard for the specific date
- You are expected to write a thank you note to your internship supervisor at the conclusion of your internship. Before the last day of the semester, take a photo of the thank you note AND photo of the envelope with the stamp on it. Upload the pictures to Blackboard. Mail the note to your supervisor.

7. Supervisor's evaluation – 200 points

- This is due the last day of class. See Blackboard for the specific date
- Near the conclusion of your internship, the internship instructor will send an email to your supervisor containing a link to an online evaluation. In this evaluation, your supervisor will rate your performance as an intern.
- The internship instructor will be the only individual who sees the results of this evaluation. The student being evaluated should not be involved in this process. Filling out your own evaluation is considered academic dishonesty and can result in failure from this course and possible consequences that would be handled at the university level.

8. Student Survey – 50 points

- This is due the last day of class. See Blackboard for the specific date.
- This is a simple way for the Department of Agricultural Education & Communications to keep data about our internship program. This will be a simple, 10-minute survey to rate your experience and help us improve.

Assignment Grading

The assignments required in this course, ACOM 4000, will be graded just like any other course you are enrolled during the semester. The assignments must be completed and turned in on Blackboard by their respective deadlines, unless otherwise noted.

You will receive a specific number of points for each assignment as noted above. The number of points you earn for each assignment will be based on the following:

- The quality of work you turn in for the assignment.
 - Narratives and assignments should be absent of grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.
- Student's ability to follow each assignment's formatting guidelines and requirements.
- The timeliness in submitting each assignment based on your internship.

Narratives and video will be graded on:

- Overall quality
 - Student displays an understanding of their job responsibilities.
 - Student provides a thorough overview of their responsibilities, challenges, achievements, and benefits from their internship.
 - Assignment is absent of GSP errors.
 - Follows the guidelines specified in the assignment.

Professional portfolios will be graded on:

- Overall quality
- Materials are presented in an online, professional manner.
- Materials are organized in a sensible manner
- Portfolio demonstrates the student's effort in assembling their materials.
- Completeness
- Portfolio is a comprehensive example of the student's work during their internship.
- Portfolio contains all the required materials as specified by the assignment.

Frequently Asked Questions

When should I do my internship?

Any time you feel ready. You are not too young nor inexperienced to do an internship. If you know of an internship that interests you, apply! Our department does not have restrictions on when a student should do an internship. Many students complete an internship in their first year.

When should I enroll in internship credit hours?

Students MUST enroll in internship credit only when actually working in their internship. Students are not allowed to complete the work at an internship one semester, and then enroll in credit hours in another semester. For example, if you secure an internship in April, and that experience would start in May, you must enroll in internship credit for summer.

I am going to continue working at my internship after this semester. When should I submit my final internship video and online portfolio?

Many students continue to work at the business/organization where they were completing their internship. This is a good thing! Students should complete their final internship materials and portfolio at the end of the semester when they are enrolled in internship credit hours.

My internship does not allow me to keep or save my work items. What should I include in my portfolio?

Some students work in places where the supervisors are not comfortable with the student keeping, saving, or sharing items from their work. It is advised you discuss with your supervisor at the beginning of your internship about what items you can keep for your portfolio. ALL students must turn in an online portfolio. No exceptions.

I did not produce many tangible items during my internship. What do I include in my portfolio?

If your internship required you to complete tasks such as plan events, work at trade shows, participate in trade shows, or other similar activities, you may have fewer tangible items to include in your portfolio. Therefore, you should take photographs or videos of the events and provide some sort of documentation of your work. You may also write a brief narrative or include a blog in your portfolio to explain individual work responsibilities or events you participated in during your online internship if you are unable to provide any other examples of your work.

Does everyone enrolled in internship credit hours get an “A”?

No. Your grade will depend on your level of performance both in your internship and on the required assignments associated with the ACOM 4000 course. It is possible to fail the internship course if you do not turn in assignments or if there is evidence of academic dishonesty.

What does a “PR” grade mean?

A PR grade simply means the work you are doing is still “in progress” and a final grade has not yet been awarded to the student. Students in the ACOM 4000 internship course sometimes

receive PR grades when they continue their internship work beyond a defined semester in which they are enrolled in internship credit hours. Once the student completes all their final assignments, a “change of grade” request is made by the internship instructor to give the student their final earned grade.

To be clear, failing to turn in assignments is NOT grounds for receiving a PR grade. Only students who have satisfactorily completed their requirements while continuing their internships into the next semester will be given a PR grade. If the student chooses to do this, he or she needs to notify the internship instructor at least a week before final grades are due.

Is it possible to fail the ACOM 4000 internship course?

Absolutely. Failure to turn in the required assignments, a grade of F from the internship supervisor, academic dishonesty, or failure to respond to communication from the internship instructor or academic adviser about internship course-related items can result in a failure from the ACOM 4000 course.

How do I determine how many credit hours I will receive for my internship?

The number of credit hours you will enroll in for your internship are determined by you and your academic adviser. Several factors are used to determine the number of hours, including length of internship, number of hours you will work each week in the internship, and location. See the table above for guidance, and work with your academic adviser to conclude.

I am not getting along well with my internship supervisor. What do I do?

If problems or disagreements arise during the internship, first try to resolve the issue on your own by speaking to your supervisor in person. It’s always best to work out issues face to face, on your own. However, sometimes situations become more complicated and prove difficult to resolve. If that happens, contact the internship instructor or your academic adviser as soon as possible so that a resolution can be achieved.

Still have a question?

Contact the internship instructor, Dr. Erica Irlbeck at Erica.irlbeck@ttu.edu. Do not wait until the end of your internship or the end of your semester to ask questions. If you have an issue or question, contact Dr. Irlbeck as soon as it arises.

Changing Variable Credit Course Hours

Once you enroll in a course that is variable credit hours, the system will automatically enroll you in the minimum number of hours for that course.

Click on **"My Schedule and Options"** to change the number of hours that you are enrolled in.

Click on the credit hours and it will give you credit hour range for the course in question.

