

## Reflection Paper Assignment

Each student's experience is unique, as is each student. Therefore, it is expected that you would be able to respond to the themes posed for each reflection paper *as they relate to your experience*. If there are themes posed that do not relate to your experience during the initial reflection paper, you can address them in future reflection papers as you progress through your internship.

Students should reflect on what they are learning and the insights they may be gaining about the company/organization, the professional staff with whom they work, the cultural differences they are experiencing, and their own professional and personal development. The reflection papers should be an ongoing, continuous, and critical reflection of your experience.

Each reflection paper is expected to be a maximum of three pages and written in an essay format (i.e. not in a question and answer format). This means that you will need to carefully focus on what you include in your papers and why. Anything less than two pages will not allow you to fully address the themes presented for each paper. ***Focus especially on the meaning of the work that you are doing and what you are learning (the "so what") rather than just describing the work itself (the "what").***

**For each paper**, please include: your name, major/minor, internship position, and internship company/organization at the top of page one. Reflection papers are to be double spaced, in 11 point font, with standard one inch margins. Please be sure to carefully proofread your writing and include examples to support your statements.

### Reflection paper #1

**Arrival and Settling In:** When you arrive on site, you may find yourself preoccupied with taking in new information and establishing an identity in the workplace. You will be learning new rules, the work culture and subtleties of influence, and the organizational structure. You will also learn how to gain acceptance, and continue to seek direction and focus. Perhaps you will feel overwhelmed by so much new information or by the simple or routine tasks you are requested to do as a newcomer. You will be developing a working relationship with your site supervisor.

**ASSIGNMENT: Respond to the following themes:**

- **Ambiguity:** How have you been able to deal with the ambiguity of your new role? In this new culture?
- **Communication:** What challenges have you experienced around communication and how are they impacting your interactions within the organization, with your supervisor and your coworkers?
- **Projects and contributions:** What projects have you been given thus far and how do they relate to what you have learned in your coursework?
- Conclude by discussing an example or two of **what you have learned so far that you did not expect**.

*\*Remember to use real life examples in your writing and explanations, and focus on the meaning behind your experiences (the "so what").*

## Reflection paper #2

**Reconciling expectations with reality:** By now you may have established a work routine and may no longer feel like a stranger in the organization. The reality of the work situation becomes clearer and may be a bit different from your initial expectations. You may be experiencing both the exciting and challenging aspects of your internship as well as the mundane yet essential tasks.

**Productivity and increased independence:** At this point in the internship, you are likely experiencing increased productivity, feeling more integrated into the workplace environment, being able to receive feedback, and gaining awareness. You should be gaining an understanding of what it means to be a successful intern and taking more initiative at the worksite.

**ASSIGNMENT: Respond to the following themes:**

- **Expectations vs. reality:** Revisit your original goals and expectations and discuss the progress you have made toward these goals so far. What has surprised you about the work experience, the organization, and yourself? How might your expectations need to be adjusted given what you now know about your internship company/organization, the organization's priorities and goals, and the projects you have been given?
- **Leadership:** Reflect and comment on the leadership qualities/style your supervisor has exhibited, as well as the culture of the company/organization, how employees are involved in decision making, and avenues that you and your coworkers can pursue in order to contribute to the organization.
- **Mid-term pulse:** Briefly discuss what you want to achieve during the mid-term visit. What are you most concerned about and/or pleased with to date? How might you best communicate this to your supervisor, given the cultural norms of the organization and country in which you are interning?
- Conclude by discussing an example or two of **something that went wrong for you at your internship site and how you handled it**. Looking back on it, would you have handled it differently?

## Reflection paper #3

**Adaptation:** At this point, you've likely adjusted your learning goals to reflect more realistically what you and your site supervisor believe can be accomplished. You are feeling more at home, in the office and within the local culture. You are likely feeling more confident in your ability to communicate, provide observations and suggestions, and complete your work effectively.

**Closure:** Almost immediately on the heels of feeling fully integrated into the work setting and the local culture comes the awareness that the internship will shortly be coming to a close. With this awareness comes the beginning of the closure process: wrapping up final projects, completing learning objectives, gathering information for your presentation, and receiving feedback from your supervisor. Note that creating closure is difficult for some interns, and it is not always facilitated by the site.

**ASSIGNMENT: Respond to the following themes:**

- **Cultural Adaptation:** Consider the differences between your home and host cultures, which might be glaring or subtle depending on your host culture. Discuss how these cultural differences have surfaced in the workplace. In what ways have you been able to adapt to these differences?
- **Skill development:** Reflect on your accomplishments, the skills you have developed, and the contributions you have made to your internship site. Talk with your supervisor to gain her/his final perspectives on your work. How might you convey the professional outcomes of your internship experience to a potential employer during an interview?
- **Unanticipated learning:** With an awareness that your internship is drawing to a close, think about and comment on what you may have learned that you didn't expect at the outset of this experience - about the career field, the company/organization, the local culture, and yourself.

*\*Remember to use real life examples in your writing and explanations, and focus on the meaning behind your experiences (the "so what").*