



INTERN PROGRAM FAQ

1. WHAT IS THE PERKINS INTERNSHIP?

The Perkins Internship is a required course for the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) and Master of Arts in Ministry (M.A.M.) degrees. The student does ministry in a church or agency setting under the supervision of a lay teaching committee, a mentor pastor, a psychological consultant, and a member of the Intern Program faculty. The internship is designed to help students prepare themselves for faithful leadership in Christian ministry by

- acquiring competence and self-confidence in carrying out the work of ministry
- growing in awareness and integration of their personal and professional identities and gaining in emotional, spiritual and interpersonal maturity
- deepening their understanding of ministry through theological reflection.

2. WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR INTERNSHIP?

M.Div. candidates may choose either a *full-time* or a *part-time* internship. The full-time internship requires a minimum of 35 hours of work in the internship placement. The part-time M.Div. intern will work a minimum of 25 hours a week in the internship. All M.A.M. interns do a part-time internship, working a minimum of 20 hours a week in the specialized area of their degree track. All interns receive a minimum stipend (*see Q. 17 below*).

3. WHEN SHOULD A STUDENT DO INTERNSHIP?

M.Div. candidates generally apply for internship in the fall of the academic year in which they will complete the courses recommended in preparation for internship, though the Intern faculty will be glad to talk to them at any time to help them look at options. Many M.Div. students choose to complete all other degree requirements before doing a full-time internship in the final year of their degree program. M.A.M. students who plan to complete their degree program in two years will need to apply for internship during their first Fall term at Perkins in order to do internship in their second and final year. All students should plan ahead for internship from the beginning of their degree program.

4. HOW ARE INTERNS PLACED IN AN INTERNSHIP?

Students apply in the fall of one academic year for an internship to begin the following fall. A member of the Intern faculty will work with each prospective intern to find and develop an internship placement that offers good potential for learning. Students are encouraged to explore placement possibilities with funding to cover the required stipend and to bring these suggestions to the placement conversation. If students are already employed in a church or agency where they wish to do internship, the Intern faculty must approve the proposed placement and supervision.

5. *HOW LONG IS THE INTERNSHIP?*

Perkins internships are nine months long, over the fall and spring terms of one academic year. They begin in mid-August and end in May shortly before Commencement. The single exception to this rule is the CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) internship in which the student does a CPE residency on the schedule dictated by their accredited CPE center, which is usually four units and 12 months long.

6. *DOES A STUDENT RECEIVE DEGREE CREDIT FOR INTERNSHIP?*

Successful completion of an internship earns nine credit hours (4.5 per term) toward the M.Div. degree or six credit hours (three per term) toward the M.A.M. degree. *(M.Div. candidates who enrolled in that degree program before Summer 2014 earn 12 credit hours, six per term.)*

7. *MAY A STUDENT HOLD OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT OR TAKE ADDITIONAL COURSES DURING INTERNSHIP?*

The part-time internship is designed for students who wish to take additional courses or hold jobs outside the internship placement. While these options are not prohibited by the Intern Program for full-time interns, these students should be aware that the full-time internship course is very demanding and that they will need to work with their placement supervisors to make sure the additional responsibilities do not interfere with their ministry or their learning. The intern faculty will help students make the choice between full-time and part-time internship in order to maintain life balance and optimal learning in their particular situations.

8. *MAY AN AGENCY OR EXTENSION MINISTRY SERVE AS AN INTERNSHIP SETTING?*

Yes, if the learning and professional goals of the student are best served in that setting. In some cases an agency placement is linked with a church congregation to ensure the student's exposure to the full range of ministry.

9. *HOW CAN A CHURCH OR AGENCY BECOME A PERKINS PLACEMENT SITE?*

A church or agency may contact the Perkins Intern Office by September 30 to be considered as a teaching partner for internships beginning the following August. *(Contact information is at the end of this document.)*

10. *MAY STUDENTS DO INTERNSHIP WITHIN THEIR OWN DENOMINATIONS?*

The Intern Faculty is committed to placing students in internships within their own denomination whenever possible and to working with each student's denominational polity in a way that satisfies its requirements and maintains the standards of the Intern Program.

11. *WHAT IS REQUIRED OF THE CONGREGATION OR AGENCY?*

To become a teaching congregation or agency, the administrative board or other representative governing body:

- Commits itself to share the congregation's faith and ministry or the agency's mission with the student in ways that encourage and facilitate the student's personal, spiritual, and professional growth.
- Agrees to provide a lay teaching committee whose members will attend a two-hour orientation and then meet regularly with the intern to provide support and feedback.
- Agrees to honor the pastor's commitment of time, if she/he is the mentor pastor, for supervision of the intern.
- Agrees to support the intern financially; a minimum stipend is set for each type of internship (*see Q. 17 below*).

12. WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THE MENTOR PASTOR?

The mentor pastor is the professional person who accepts primary supervisory and teaching responsibility for the intern. The mentor pastor commits:

- To attend the New Mentor Pastor Institute, a two-day orientation to the Perkins Intern Program held on campus before the internship begins.
- To select individuals to serve on the intern's lay teaching committee (if serving on site at the intern's placement) and to attend the committee orientation and the midpoint and final evaluation meetings.
- To attend two daylong Mentor Pastor Colloquies (one per semester) on campus during the internship.
- To observe the intern engaged in ministry and to offer constructive mentoring.
- To meet with the intern on a regular basis during the internship for supervisory sessions (60 to 90 minutes each), many of which will be focused on a theological reflection paper written by the intern about a recent ministry experience.
- To participate in the evaluation process and all evaluation conferences.

13. WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THE LAY TEACHING COMMITTEE?

The lay teaching committee, usually comprising six to eight persons, should reflect the composition of the congregation/agency and be committed to the mutual learning process of the internship. The committee commits itself:

- To attend the Lay Teaching Committee Orientation led by the intern faculty and to meet with the intern at least once a month throughout the internship.
- To support the intern personally, spiritually and professionally through prayer and constructive feedback.
- To find opportunities to observe the intern in ministry and to share with the intern honest, constructive opinions about the intern's work in fulfillment of the required ministry competencies.
- To participate in the evaluation process and all evaluation conferences.

14. WHAT ARE THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE INTERN?

- Doing real ministry under supervision
- Attending Intern Orientation at the start of the internship
- Attending all Lay Teaching Committee meetings, including the orientation

- Writing a Learning Covenant detailing learning goals and planned experiences to achieve and demonstrate mastery of the Course Competencies
- Writing a specified number of theological reflection papers on ministry experiences during the internship
- Meeting on a regular basis with the mentor pastor for supervisory sessions
- Participating in the Internship Seminar led by the Intern faculty and a mental health consultant skilled in church family systems, or an equivalent experience if distance precludes such meetings.
- Preparation for and participation in all evaluation conferences.

15. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE INTERN FACULTY?

The primary responsibility of the Intern faculty is to supervise the internships of all M.Div. and M.A.M. students. The responsibilities of the Intern faculty include:

- Developing and negotiating intern placements
- Planning and conducting the following training events: Intern Orientation, New Mentor Pastor Institute, Lay Teaching Committee Orientation, Consultant Convocation, and the Mentor Pastor Colloquy series
- Supervising the Internship Seminar and the mental health Consultants who work with the intern groups
- Being available for unscheduled consultation with the intern or any other member of the internship team as needed
- Organizing and conducting all evaluation conferences
- Making the final decision regarding the satisfactory or unsatisfactory completion of all internships and giving the final grade of Pass, Incomplete, or No Credit

16. HOW DOES AN INTERN DIFFER FROM A PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER?

A professional staff member is oriented toward the performance of tasks. The intern is engaged in an educational process of professional formation, doing ministry and reflecting upon it in order to become a competent and thoughtful Christian leader.

17. WHAT IS THE COST OF THE PROGRAM TO THE CONGREGATION OR AGENCY?

The *full-time intern* receives a minimum stipend of \$15,000 for a nine-month internship (August to May, so the expense is spread over two church budget years). The *part-time M.Div. intern* receives a minimum stipend of \$10,800 for the nine-month internship. The *part-time M.A.M. intern* receives a minimum stipend of \$9,000 for the nine-month internship. Internship stipends are treated as income by the IRS, so taxes should be withheld. Churches and agencies budgeting for an intern should include the employer portion of FICA tax in their estimate. Interns are generally responsible for their own health insurance, though the placement church or agency may wish to assist in providing that benefit if its resources permit.

For more information, please contact:

*Dr. Thomas W. Spann, Director of the Intern Program
Perkins School of Theology, SMU
214.768.2166
tspann@smu.edu*