

Earning Academic Credit at UTK for a Tech Comm Internship Via *English 493: Independent Study*

"Tech comm internship" means any kind of internship focusing on professional communication. In other words, internships with publishers, journal editors, advertisers, journalists, etc. are usually just fine—as are, of course, writing/editing/document design internships at specifically "tech comm" sites both on and off campus (University of Tennessee Press; design sensory; Oak Ridge National Laboratory; Science Applications International Corporation; Siemens, etc.).

English 493 (Independent Study) is the UT English Department's vehicle for allowing students to receive academic credit for internship work. I'm willing to be your professor for this kind of independent study if:

1. You submit your application to Dr. Heather Hirschfeld, Director of Undergraduate Studies—312 McClung Tower hhirschf@utk.edu, 974-5401— by the deadline for any given term—that is, within 10 days of term's start. Academic credit should not be an afterthought, and certainly it cannot be given retroactively.

Note: your application must explain what the proposed internship will include, what skills you hope to develop, and how your particular internship fits within your career plans. It should also specify that you are applying for three credit hours of English 493, and that you'll be serving a minimum of 150 hours in connection with your internship. You may also apply for two credit hours (100 hours of internship work) or 1 credit hour (50 hours of internship work.) But be aware that anything fewer than the standard three hours does not fit neatly into most curricular structures.

2. The focus of your internship is technical/professional communication.

3. You have a good mentor (supervisor) on site who will guide you, give you feedback on your ongoing performance, and will write me an evaluation of your performance at the close of your internship.

4. You turn in to me the weekly email reports and final portfolio I require.

There is no requirement that we meet in person; electronic contact is enough—but you're welcome to stop by my office during my office hours or make an appointment if you wish to see me in person.

Generally, I assign no readings or tests for an internship; I assume that necessary readings, and "real life" evaluations, are an integral feature of your internship experience. The typical internship requires about 12 hours per week (not including travel time). In more detail, here is what you must do:

- Email me weekly with a report on what you're learning and doing, and with any other information or questions you may wish to communicate.
- Keep copies of the documents you write/edit/design during your internship. (You will later select representative samples for inclusion in a portfolio.) If you are working with web pages, make some hard copy showing the stages of your work, or at least one "before" and "after" shot. If you are

working on proprietary documents and cannot make copies, you must explain this in your final report.

- Keep copies of any memos or reports that you submit to your internship supervisor (your on-site mentor).
- Write up a final internship report at the end of the semester (8 to 10 pages) describing the work you did during the internship and all other aspects of the internship experience. Be sure to assess the internship's value to your education and projected professional life. Add any suggestions/concerns/etc. that you wish to include.
- Persuade your supervisor (mentor, boss) to write me a letter at the end of the internship--some kind of assessment of your performance. Your supervisor must write me such an assessment and to send it to me within several days of the end of the internship. Be winsome in making your request.
- Combine these materials--representative documents, memos to supervisor, and final internship report--into a well-designed portfolio (complete with title page, introduction, and table of contents). Three-ring binders with tabbed dividers work well. If you wish, you may include in your portfolio the emails you sent to me throughout the semester. NOTE: Make *two copies* of your portfolio, one for me and one for you. I will keep my copy of your portfolio. I recommend that you keep yours as well--it is an excellent job-hunting tool. Also note: you may create a "web portfolio" if you wish.

How I Decide Your Grade

I read all the weekly reports, I evaluate your entire portfolio, and I read the statement from your mentor/boss. Then I assign a grade to you. *The quality of your writing figures prominently in your grade.*

The typical number of credit hours for an internship such as I've described here is three. Dr. Hirschfeld requires all students wishing to receive academic credit for internships via Independent Study 493 to abide by her guidelines and to fill out the planning statement for English 493: Independent Study (see departmental website).

Please email me (rk@utk.edu) with your planning statement before turning in the form to Dr. Hirschfeld. If I'm satisfied with it, I'll let you know, and you may then bring it to the secretaries in McClung 311; they'll put it into my mailbox. I'll sign it and give it to Dr. Hirschfeld. (You may design your own form or use the one provided in McClung 311.) If I'm not happy with your statement, I'll let you know why and you can then revise the statement or negotiate with me about it.