

University Policy 4108: Unpaid Research Interns

Category: Academic Affairs

Sub Category: Research

Covered Individuals: All USU Employees and Unpaid Research Interns

Responsible Executive: Vice President for Research

Policy Custodian: Associate Vice President for Research

Last Revised: 2022/03/23

Previous USU Policy Number: 589

4108.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

To support the University's commitment to engaging students in its research efforts and ensure the safety and fairness of those experiences, this policy formalizes the authorization to work with, train, and supervise Unpaid Research Interns. This policy also provides certain requirements related to the supervision and contributions of Unpaid Research Interns.

4108.2 POLICY

2.1 Research Interns

In furtherance of research and education goals, Responsible Units may allow a student (USU or approved non-USU student) to serve as a Research Intern. While a Research Intern does not receive wages or academic credit for their involvement and does not provide this involvement as part of a requirement for a degree or a course, Internships under this Policy must be for the primary benefit of the Research Intern. This benefit must come in the form of hands-on or other training in an educational environment.

Research Interns are not employees, are provided no expectation of compensation and no entitlement to a paid position at the conclusion of a Internship. Research Interns must be willing to engage in the Internship in accordance with the limitations provided in this policy.

2.2 Allowed Activities

Under the supervision of a Supervising University Employee, Research Interns may conduct research and perform research-related tasks, including laboratory and field work, where such experience is consistent with ongoing training under appropriate supervision and where such experience is for the primary benefit of the Research Intern.

2.3 Disallowed Activities (Research Interns are Prohibited from)

2.3.1. Conducting research or performing research-related tasks for which they have not been trained, unless that training is provided for them during the research experience.

2.3.2. Conducting research or performing research-related tasks in such a manner that would place the Research Intern, University personnel, or University property at risk for harm beyond those risks ordinarily encountered and/or reasonably expected during the performance of research-related tasks.

2.3.3. Operating heavy equipment without appropriate training, experience, and authorization.

2.3.4. Any illegal, illicit, or other conduct that violates university policies.

2.3.5. Entering into a contract on behalf of the University.

2.3.6. Working with export-controlled materials and/or technologies.

2.3.7. Working with hazards covered by Biosafety Level III (BSL-III) protocols.

2.3.8. Working with stored energy or hazardous materials, except where such work is specially authorized by the Responsible-Unit.

2.3.9. Entering any area of campus that is not either open for the public or that the Research Intern has been specially authorized to enter.

2.4 General Requirements

2.4.1. Research Interns are expected to abide by all University policies, procedures, and external regulations that govern the area where they are performing service. Research Interns must complete a Research Internship Participation Agreement.

2.4.2. All Research Intern appointments must be approved and accepted by the Responsible Unit prior to participation. The Responsible Unit must ensure that the Intern has or is provided with appropriate experience, qualifications, and training for the tasks to be performed.

2.4.3 A Research Intern may not be used to displace or negatively impact the employment of a current employee or replace a past employee or position.

2.4.4 A Research Intern may not perform functions traditionally performed by a University employee and may not provide services that are substantially the same as those provided by a University employee in a paid position without approval by the Office of Human Resources.

2.4.5 Research Intern arrangements may not be used to circumvent the established processes that govern the University hiring process.

2.4.6 Research Intern status may not be used as a way to avoid or defer compliance with the employment eligibility requirements of federal immigration laws.

2.4.7 Research Internships are not intended to create an employment relationship nor to be covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act. Research Internships must be created and maintained in a manner that provides the primary benefit of the relationship to the Research Intern.

2.4.8 Research Interns are not eligible for compensation or University employment benefits in their capacity as Interns.

2.4.9 Research Interns are eligible for workers' compensation coverage as a result of their Internship involvement for the University.

2.4.10 Research Interns may be indemnified by the University.

2.4.11 Research Interns who have "direct contact" with minors, meaning any interaction providing care, supervision, guidance, or control of minors or involving routine interaction with minors as defined in USU Policy 534: Protection of Minors, or Research Interns who are performing duties in security sensitive positions, must have a background check in compliance with USU Policy 386: Criminal Background Checks.

2.4.12 Research performed with the assistance of a Research Intern must be performed consistent with all other University Policies.

4108.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Supervising University Employee

Research Interns receive training and experience in research under the direct supervision of a University employee. A supervising University employee is responsible for day-to-day research operations and for the safety, supervision, and training of Research Intern, including the responsibility for the design, conduct, and enforcement of reasonable and prudent safety and training procedures. Supervising University Employees are also responsible for reviewing and authorizing research Interns to work with stored energy and/or hazardous materials. Such authorization should only be made where the work may be performed in a safe manner.

3.2 Responsible Units

Responsible Units must oversee the safe and fair implementation of Research Intern experiences. Responsible Units must establish a clear set of expectations for how Research Interns will be onboarded and supervised during their experience. Units are responsible for ensuring that Research Interns are given appropriate experience and training for the research activities in which they are engaged and are responsible for ensuring that all Research Interns complete the Research Intern Participation Agreement.

3.3 Vice President for Research

The Vice President for Research is responsible for providing the frameworks and tools that will enable Responsible Units and Supervising University Employees to implement fair and safe Research Internships for students. The Vice President for Research is also responsible for publishing any necessary or appropriate guidance related to the activities allowed by this Policy. The Office of the Vice President of Research provides support for research training including environmental health and safety, human subjects research, and animal care and use.

3.4 Research Interns

Research Interns are responsible for complying with all applicable laws and regulations, as well as all applicable University policies, procedures, and practices, including without limitation applicable laboratory safety manuals. Research Interns must complete all required paperwork and obtain and maintain any necessary training, certification, or knowledge required in the area where they are performing service.

4108.4 REFERENCES

- None

589.5 RELATED USU POLICIES

- [USU Policy 3014 Safety and Health](#)
- [USU Policy 4102 Research](#)

589.6 DEFINITIONS

6.1 Responsible Units

A Responsible Unit is an academic department, college, or unit that is led by a Department Head and Dean or other responsible executive(s). Supervising University Employees report to Responsible Units. For purposes of fulfilling the responsibilities under this policy, a Department or unit head may act as the responsible authority for an Academic Unit.

6.2 Research Intern

A Research Intern is a University student or an approved non-university student who voluntarily conducts research, or performs research-related tasks, for the University for the purpose of supporting the research efforts of the University and to gain experience and knowledge in the research field.

6.3 Supervising University Employee

A supervising University Employee is a USU faculty or staff member in good standing who has sufficient experience and training to provide safe and effective supervision of research activities and is engaged in University research with the assistance of a Research Intern.

Information below is not included as part of the contents of the official Policy. It is provided only as a convenience for readers/users and may be changed at any time by persons authorized by the President, subject to review by the USU Policy Committee.

RESOURCES

Procedures

- 4108-PR1 Filing of Mentor Agreement for Unpaid Research Intern

Contacts

- Office of the Vice President for Research, (435) 797-1180

POLICY HISTORY

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