

Internship in Voluntary Work (5 ECTS)

All students in Metropolia are welcome to carry out the course Internship in Voluntary Work. For students in Degree Programme in Social Services it is a part of a module called Empowerment and Advocacy in Socio-pedagogical Work, which aims at enabling students to use empowering socio-pedagogical methods in client work. It is recommendable for students from other fields to discuss with the responsible person in their degree programme, how the course is linked with their personal study plan as well as which professional aims may perhaps be set for it.

The aim of the Internship in Voluntary Work (5 ECTS) is to familiarize students with voluntary and civic activities, their significance, principles and practices. The students are able to apply ethical principles both in their professional and voluntary work. Students plan and implement their practical training taking into consideration their professional developmental aims. Students promote justice, human rights, equality and sustainable development in their work.

Framework of the internship

The internship is carried out during studies according to a plan prepared by the student. It can consist of e.g. civic activity, voluntary work or acting as a support person. The schedule of the internship isn't restricted to one semester, as it can be carried out in a flexible manner throughout the studies. In social services the internship usually starts after the first year of studies and is mostly finalized during the second year. The Internship in Voluntary Work can be carried out in unpaid work only.

The extent of the course is 5 credits which entails 135 hours of student work: approximately 100 hours of voluntary work related activities and approximately 35 hours of orientation and assessment of learning. If you participate in an orientation training or counselling sessions for volunteers organized by your organization, a maximum of 20 hours of such activities can also be included in your internship. Thus, the minimum for doing actual voluntary work is 80 hours. If the internship is carried out in a very intensive setting e.g. a summer camp, a maximum of 16 hours in a day can be counted as part of the internship. The student should do a minimum of 20 hours voluntary work in one organization. Often it is justifiable to commit oneself to one organization for a clearly longer time.

For degree programme students it is possible to get their previously acquired skills partially recognized, if they have already done some voluntary work and have certificates to prove it. Voluntary work carried out prior to the age of 18 isn't considered. The electronic application is addressed to the coordinating teacher of the internship in voluntary work. In a situation your hours are accepted, you should still carry out the theory based assignment and the self-evaluation. The internship in voluntary work can also be carried out abroad. In this case, please discuss your plans with the coordinating teachers and the contact person for international affairs in your degree programme.

Stages of Internship in Voluntary Work

1. Orientation to voluntary work

- 1) The students participate in an **Information Session for Internship in Voluntary Work**, which is organized approximately twice a semester. Participation in the information session (4 hours) can be included in the working hour record for the internship. If you are not present, you are expected to get acquainted with the implementation of the internship independently by interviewing other students and/or reading carefully the materials in the Moodle workspace for this course.
- 2) The students familiarize themselves with the purpose and the principles of voluntary work independently. The **background reading material** can be found in the Moodle workspace for this course.

- 3) Based on the background reading material the students write an **Orientation Assignment**, which consists of reflection and personal learning aims. The extent of the assignment is approximately 4 pages and it is submitted to the Moodle workspace for the course preferably prior to the beginning of the internship. Please note: there should be references to the reading material in your assignment.

The orientation assignment covers for example the following questions:

- What is the significance of voluntary work in the Finnish society and in your own professional field?
 - In what manner voluntary work is connected with justice, human rights, equality and sustainable development?
 - While familiarizing yourself with the background reading material, what felt particularly significant, influential, controversial or confusing to you personally?
 - Making use of the background material, what aims do you set for your Internship in Voluntary Work and your learning altogether?
- 4) Simultaneously with the orientation assignment the students search for an **organization**, in which they can carry out their internship. Support for finding a suitable organization is available e.g. in the following manner:
- list of collaboration partners for Internship in Voluntary Work (see a link in Moodle to a wiki-site called Metropolia: Vapaaehtoistoiminnan harjoittelu - Internship in Voluntary Work)
 - peer support discussions carried out in conjunction with the Information Sessions for Internship in Voluntary Work
 - various events and portals (e.g. voluntary work fair Vapaaehtoistoiminnan messut yearly before Christmas, www.vapaaehtoistyö.fi portal)

It isn't necessary to carry out your internship only in organisations which co-ordinate voluntary work. You can for example initiate and carry out voluntary work yourself. In this case, please ask for an approval from the co-ordinating teacher of the course in advance. It's advisable to ask for an approval also for private sector organisations or internships carried out among familiar people (e.g. family, relatives, neighbours, acquaintances) in advance. Please note that students carrying out this internship are covered by Metropolia's insurance only if they are hosted by an organisation.

- 5) Together with the labour market partner, the students prepare an **Implementation Plan** (see a form in the Moodle workspace for this course). The aim is to submit the signed plan in Moodle within two weeks from the beginning of the internship. If you carry your internship out in several organisations, each needs to have their own plan.

2. Implementing the Internship in practice

- 6) The students carry out their **Internship in Voluntary Work** according to the Implementation Plan. If drastic changes take place, it is advisable to prepare a new Implementation Plan in the Moodle workspace for this course.

When implementing your internship, please remember the following:

- Getting familiar with the context of voluntary work is necessary. If you work as a volunteer e.g. in an NGO, it is important to know its history and values. They are the foundation for all activity and understanding these principles help you to understand the organization as a whole.
- Principles generally applied in voluntary work are accepting different people and values, equality, respecting each individual's rights, trust in other people and the ability for the community to solve problems independently.
- The basic duty in voluntary work is professional confidentiality, which is the core element of voluntary work and a vital principle for building trust. When working as a volunteer,

you need to keep the appointments you make, and take part in meetings, orientation/training and guidance offered by the collaboration organization.

- Voluntary workers never replace professionals but complement different forms and structures of support with their know-how.

If you need supervision during your internship, you should turn to the contact person in your organization. In many organisations co-ordinating voluntary work have rather established structures for supporting their volunteers. If you need additional support, you may also contact the teachers co-ordinating this course. Please keep in mind also the opportunity for getting peer support from other students, who carry out their internship simultaneously, during the Internship in Voluntary Work Information Sessions approximately twice a year.

- 7) While carrying out their Internship in Voluntary Work, the students document their hours (see **Working Hour Record** form in Moodle workspace for this course). The approximately 100 hours of voluntary work, potential trainings and supervision sessions should be confirmed by contact person(s) in your organization(s). Your own reporting for hours in independent work e.g. in the orientation assignment and the assessment is enough. A signed working hour record is scanned and saved in the Moodle workspace for this course.

3. Assessment of Learning, Finishing the Internship

- 8) When the students have done enough hours in the internship and returned all the required assignments, they assess their own learning by filling in an e-form called **Assessment of Learning in Voluntary Work**. The link can be found in the Moodle workspace for this course.
- 9) Teachers co-ordinating the course check the assignments and give **grades** approximately once a month. If you need to have the grade urgently e.g. because of graduation, please notify them by e-mail. **If the internship has been carried out abroad, you should notify the international contact person in the degree programme and use the Social Services Student Work Placement Abroad Moodle space for information and documentation return.** The assessment is one of the following: pass - to be supplemented - fail.

A summary of assignments to be handed in:

- Orientation Assignment
- Implementation Plan
- Working Hour Record
- Assessment of Learning

You may read more about learning through voluntary work from the perspective of Metropolia Degree Programme in Social Services in Manninen, N. & Raatikainen, E. 2014. Learning through Service and Volunteerism - Ideas for Universities of Applied Sciences.