

# John Jay College Forensic Science Internship Overview

## FOS 401

Science Internship Director: **Peter Diaczuk**

Contact Information: **fos401@gmail.com**

Office 3.77NB Hours by appointment only

The internship experience can be a very exciting and rewarding experience. One key to getting the most out of the experience is good communication between the intern and the agency hosting the internship. It is highly recommended that the intern meet with a representative of the hosting agency to discuss how the 400 hours to be invested will be most beneficial for both parties. This meeting must take place *before* the start of the internship. Research what forensic disciplines are available at a particular host agency *prior* to contacting them (e.g. do not expect to perform DNA analysis in a trace laboratory). The learning possibilities exceed those that may be achieved within the academic institution, because there is no substitute for practical experience. A successful internship may even result in a job opportunity. Historically, many students have been hired as full-time forensic scientists by the laboratory in which each interned.

Many laboratories require the intern to perform a research project during his/her internship. To prepare for this eventuality, compile a list of at least four topics or projects that you would like to research (note that you can only work within the scope of the agency; you simply cannot walk into an internship and perform “random” work). Be prepared, however, to perform a research project on a different topic if the host agency cannot accommodate any of the topics on your list. To assist you in preparing your list, and to gain an understanding of the material, perform a literature search. Have all relevant information with you at the interview and submit a copy to the science internship director for your file.

## Requirements:

The internship requirement is met after a minimum of 400 hours are spent in the forensic science environment of a crime laboratory, medical examiner's office, prosecutor's office laboratory, or similar institution or agency. The location MUST be approved by the Science Internship Director at John Jay College *before* beginning the internship, to ensure the agency can provide the requisite forensic experience. With few exceptions, internships are unpaid, and currently held employment positions cannot be considered in lieu of the internship. (Attempts to separate work hours from internship hours are traditionally unsuccessful and, therefore, not permitted.) Similarly, time spent in a laboratory prior to enrolling in FOS 401 cannot be considered as part of the internship. Another internship scenario that is totally unacceptable is one where "secrecy" forbids the intern from maintaining a daily lab book of activities and tasks. Such internships do not fulfill the spirit of a laboratory experience, which fosters the documentation and sharing of information, not concealing it. Students may enroll in FOS 401 for the summer session, although it is shorter than the other semesters, so interns may have difficulty completing the internship before grades are due. If the requisite hours are not fulfilled within the semester that the intern is registered for FOS 401, an "incomplete" grade will be entered, which will be replaced with a letter grade upon completion of the requirements of the course. If the internship is not completed within the semester immediately subsequent to the semester of enrollment, the computer grading system will *automatically* change the "INC" to "F". Again, upon completion of the requirements, this grade can be changed without detriment; however, this type of grade change takes longer to process than an original submission, so patience on the part of the student is required. Once the appropriate grade is submitted, the "F" will no longer appear on the transcript, as it was generated by the computer as a matter of protocol.

It is the student's responsibility to secure the internship with an approved host agency, obtain and fill out permission forms or applications, and supply the agency with any documents that it requires. It is also the student's responsibility to make whatever arrangements are necessary to complete the 400 hours, whether full-time or part-time, directly with the agency. Obviously, the student must register for the course, FOS 401, and fulfill all of the pre-requisites, as described in the current John Jay College Undergraduate Bulletin. A list of contact information for local forensic laboratories has been compiled as a courtesy by the JJC Forensic Science Society, Science Department faculty and staff, and former interns and has been circulating among the student body. This list is not inclusive, however, and may be subject to phone number changes, crime lab staff changes, etc. Furthermore, the prospective intern is not limited to the agencies on the list. (To benefit future interns and perpetuate the list, students are encouraged to bring updated information to the attention of the internship director.) Be aware that some government agencies will show preference to those individuals residing within their jurisdictions. If a student has friends or family in other regions of the country, an internship remote from

the New York City metropolitan area may be desirable. In the past, for example, students have interned in forensic science laboratories in California, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Canada. If a student has made contact with a laboratory that appears to meet the aforementioned requirements but is not on the list, the contact information for that lab must be forwarded to the science internship director for the development of a memorandum of understanding before the internship can be approved. It is also advisable to show the laboratory supervisor this overview so there is no ambiguity that the supervisor will be asked for an evaluation of the intern at the conclusion of the internship.

The prospective intern must supply the following information, which will be kept on file, to the internship director prior to commencing the internship: a signed copy of this document, a current curriculum vitae (CV) (examples of CVs and tips for writing and formatting CVs can be obtained from various websites), an unofficial transcript from e-sims, a passport-size (minimum 2x2") photograph, contact information, and emergency contact information. In addition to paper versions of the aforementioned items, electronic versions must be sent to [fos401@gmail.com](mailto:fos401@gmail.com). Please note that the hosting agency may have additional requirements, such as a statement of intent, a minimum GPA (usually 3.0), pre-requisite science classes, senior standing in the major, a reference letter, a polygraph test, or a background check. A letter of sponsorship, indicating that the internship is a requirement for graduation, will be made upon request if required by the host agency (such as the NYPD crime lab, which also requires proprietary forms to be filled out).

The intern MUST keep a daily log of activities in the form of a bound lab notebook, clearly labeled with the student's name, four-digit ID number, semester of enrollment and course number. Entries are to be made in pen, be legible, and must include a summary of hours invested and work performed each day. (A convenient way of documenting both in the same book is to use the front of the notebook for daily notes and the back pages to summarize the daily start/stop times.) All pages in the bound notebook must be numbered, not only the pages used. Only items/tasks of importance should be documented, such as experiments or procedures. Judgment must be exercised regarding what to document; too little will imply not much was done, too much will imply more time was spent on superficial writing than on performing more important laboratory procedures. At the conclusion of 400 hours, the intern will write a reflective statement about the internship, including the work or research performed, what was learned, how theoretical concepts were integrated into practical applications, how it might affect his/her career in forensic science and a description of good or bad experiences (no specific detail is given for the length of the statement because of varied writing styles and abilities, but do not expect a good grade if your 400-hour internship experience is condensed into merely 2 or 3 pages). The statement, along with the laboratory notebook, will be submitted to the internship director for grading. Additionally, the student must submit a short critique of the internship experience. It should highlight suggestions of how the internship could have been more beneficial. The content of the

critique will not be factored into the grade or submitted to the host agency. (It is for the benefit of future interns only.) The intern's supervisor at the host agency will write a letter to the science internship director, briefly describing the duties performed, recommending a grade and including any relevant information about the intern's performance, work ethic, abilities, attitude, professionalism, laboratory skills, etc., of the intern. This shall be on official letterhead, signed, and sealed in an envelope to be opened only by the internship director. Any unsealed grade recommendations will be verified with the sender. The assessment of these three items (intern statement, letter from supervisor, and lab book content, including time records) will all factor into the final grade, which will be assigned by the internship director. If a grade is expected for that semester, all three items must be submitted at least two weeks **before** the grades are due. Because of the importance of the laboratory notebook, it will be returned to the student after review. (Many students have found their lab books invaluable when preparing for a job interview, so students are encouraged to retrieve their books as soon as possible after the next semester begins. Note that storage space is extremely limited, so books will be discarded after the semester following the internship.)

During the internship, if there appears to be a misunderstanding of the intern's role at the hosting agency, the student is encouraged to communicate this concern with the Science Internship Director immediately. Do not work hundreds of hours before deciding to comment about something this important. Interns must send an update every 100 hours via a brief email to the Science Internship Director at fos401@gmail.com to track progress. The subject line in the email should read "internship update". Do NOT send emails with nothing written in the subject line. Such emails may be overlooked. Furthermore, these internship update emails will become a part of the intern's permanent file, so it is expected that they be written in traditional format, with proper sentence structure, punctuation and grammar. Failure to send timely internship updates, or updates sent without regard to punctuation and grammar will adversely affect the final grade. Remember that the intern is representing John Jay College during the internship and must conduct oneself in a professional and ethical manner. Any behavior (good or bad) is a reflection of both the intern and the College. The better impression you make during your internship, the more likely you will be able to secure letters of reference or be considered for future employment. Examples of proper ethics for forensic scientists may be viewed on the websites of forensic science organizations under their *Code of Ethics* links.

Note that there now exists an alternative to the internship: FOS 402 is a research project undertaken with a faculty mentor, as described in more detail in the current Undergraduate Bulletin. It is completely separate from FOS 401, and as such must be discussed with the course coordinator, Dr. Pilette, and arranged directly with the appropriate faculty mentor prior to any consideration for participation in the FOS 402 research alternative.

**Summary:**

Items needed before the internship commences: signed copy of this document with appropriate courses circled, CV, unofficial transcript, photo, and contact information. (Once these FIVE items are submitted, the registration HOLD can be lifted by obtaining the proper form from the Department Chair's Office).

Items needed during the course of the internship: emails at 100, 200, and 300 hours providing a detailed update and review of the intern's activities and experiences.

Items needed at the conclusion of the internship: sealed letter from internship supervisor, lab notebook, time log, detailed report of internship experience, and critique of internship. *All* of the documents submitted must include the student's name, four-digit ID number and semester of enrollment in FOS 401. Items submitted without this information will not be graded because ALL THREE (name, ID number, semester) are required for the grade to be submitted to the Registrar.

**Science courses successfully completed as of this date** (circle all that apply):

Calculus (MAT 241, 242)

Physics (PHY 203, 204)

Biology (BIO 103, 104)

Physical Chemistry (CHE 301, 302)

General Chemistry (CHE 103, 104)

Biochemistry (CHE 315)

Organic Chemistry (CHE 201, 202)

Instrumental Analysis (CHE 320, 321)

**Courses currently enrolled** (list only science and math):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Name (PRINT CLEARLY)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last 4 digits of SSN

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Semester registered for FOS 401

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Track in Forensic Science Program

*This overview is subject to revision as more information is received by the Science Internship Director. It supersedes all previous versions.*

Office use only

\_\_\_\_\_  
Received by

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date