

How to Host a Graduate Student at NOAA

Guidance for Mentors

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Background

NOAA Office of Education (OED) makes available opportunities for NOAA offices and programs nationwide to host graduate students. Graduate scholars are full-time students majoring in NOAA mission-related disciplines, including, but not limited to, oceanic, environmental, and atmospheric sciences, mathematics, engineering, remote sensing technology, physical and social sciences, including geography, physics and, hydrology.

Submitting an Internship Opportunity

1. The graduate student participates in projects directly related to the NOAA-mission critical sciences. Host offices are required to identify a defined science project that fellows may complete within a 10-week to 12 month timeframe.
2. The mentor and co-mentor must have a professional, scientific background, and be able to provide guidance to the fellow on their research/science project.
3. The mentor and/or co-mentor will be required to take mentor training if they have not had training within the last two years (see section on Mentor Training below).
4. Internship Opportunity (IO) positions may only be submitted by NOAA employees. To serve as a mentor for graduate students, an IO position must be described and submitted in the online **Student Scholarship Internship Opportunity (SSIO) System** for review. All projects must be substantive, with a hypothesis or objective(s) and planned outcome(s). Past and potential mentors are encouraged to submit Internship Opportunities throughout the year.
5. If the proposed Mentor is not a NOAA Employee, a individual may serve as a co-mentor. Co-mentors who are not NOAA employees may participate and lead the fellow's project with the endorsement and guidance of a NOAA scientist. The co-mentor must work at the facility where the project tasks are being conducted. NOAA employees may submit an IO on behalf of a non-NOAA scientist. The non-NOAA scientist must be identified on the IO entry form.
6. What to do if you are contacted directly by a graduate student. Graduate students or NSF Fellows may contact a current or potential mentor about creating an internship opportunity. If the mentor agrees to host the intern or fellow, the mentor must describe the project and submit the opportunity into the SSIO system. **All Internship Opportunities must be submitted through the online SSIO system for approval.**

Accessing the SSIO Online System

To access the SSIO online system, visit: <https://OedWebApps.iso.noaa.gov/ssio>. Please read the “Mentor Instructions” for creating a user account using your NOAA e-mail, and submitting an internship opportunity.

Review and Approval of Internship Opportunities

- Once the NOAA Program Manager reviews the Internship Opportunity, the status will change from *Pending* to *Approved/Disapproved*. The Mentor will receive e-mail notification within 3 business days with the status of the submitted Internship Opportunity. An Internship Opportunity that is Disapproved will have comments attached explaining the reason the opportunity was not accepted.
- Interested graduate students and fellows will see only the Internship Opportunities approved in the system. Graduate students and Fellows will be allowed to search the opportunities year round.

Interview Process

When an Internship Opportunity is posted and tagged “available”, eligible students may contact mentors to discuss their interest and schedule an interview. Mentors may receive inquiries from several graduate students about a specific Internship Opportunity. As appropriate, mentors are encouraged to interview more than one student to determine which is best suited for their project. Mentors are advised to inform the potential intern if they are interviewing other students. Mentors and students are encouraged to follow-up with each another regarding the timing of a decision.

Selecting an Intern

Once the mentor selects a graduate student for their project, the intern must email Graduate.Opportunities@noaa.gov to advise the manager that a match has been made. A copy of the communication must also be sent to the mentor. The fellow’s name and the title of the position should be listed. Once an internship opportunity match has been approved, it will no longer be available in the SSIO system. When a match is agreed upon the fellow e-mails the NOAA mentor their current resume prior to making a site visit.

Site Visits

Site visit provides the graduate student an opportunity to meet with the NOAA scientist/mentor and other staff and to discuss the project in greater detail, explore housing options, and assess the local transportation requirements.

Internship

Interns are not considered to be performing work or a job, rendering advisory or personal services, or providing expert advice. There is no commitment to future employment by the host organization or NOAA. Students & Fellows are participating in NOAA graduate level internships primarily for the experience and educational benefits they derive from conducting research in the NOAA mission sciences.

Host Office

The host office does not enter into an employee/employer relationship with the graduate students and fellows. There is no stipend or travel cost associated with hosting a graduate student. However, host offices are responsible for obtaining and paying for a NOAA badge for selected NSF fellows.

The start date for internships is determined by the NOAA mentor and the student. The student's internship participation must be conducted in a manner, and according to, a time schedule that meets the overall requirements of the host office. The interns are expected to conform to all applicable rules, regulations, and requirements of the facility including, but not limited to, those respecting environment, safety, and health (ES&H) and ES&H training requirements, security, operating and health physics procedures, drug free work place notification requirements, and conduct.

Interns & Fellows are not permitted to drive a government vehicle. NOAA recommends that students select an internship site where there is accessible public transportation if they do not own a car.

Internship Travel

Travel to conduct research or to attend workshops/conferences etc. will be paid for by the student. NOAA host offices are not required to support travel costs for internship participants.

Mentor's Roles and Responsibilities

During the internship period fellows will need an office, computer, printer, telephone, and access to the internet and fax machine.

NOAA employees selected as mentors are required to complete Mentor Training if they have not completed mentor training within the past two years.

Program guidelines require that mentors provide routine, technical and/or research guidance to the interns. During the internship period:

1. Students and mentors are required to discuss and **complete and sign a Project Plan during the first two weeks of the internship** and e-mail the signed copy to the program manager at: Graduate.Opportunities@noaa.gov
2. NOAA mentors are required to **conduct a mid-term assessment** with the scholar
3. **NOAA mentors are required to complete a final evaluation** at the end of the internship and provide the intern with a copy of the assessment.

Mentor Training

NOAA employees who agree to serve as mentors are required to complete online mentor training if they have not completed mentor training in the past two years. Potential mentors in need of mentor training may visit the Commerce Learning Center (CLC) at: <https://doc.learn.com/noaa>. The CLC has web-based courses available. We recommend: *“Essential Mentoring Techniques: Building and Maintaining Mentoring Relationships”*.

Frequently Asked Questions

NOAA Mentors and potential NOAA Mentors

What is the role of the NOAA mentor?

The NOAA mentor is responsible for: developing a NOAA-related project that can be completed in 10-weeks through 12 months; day-to-day guidance as needed; office space; a computer; and, access to a telephone, fax, and the internet. NOAA mentors will provide guidance on the research, science, operations, outreach, or policy topic. The NOAA mentor will also monitor and assess the student intern's progress.

The NOAA mentor is also responsible for:

- completing Mentor Training at: <https://doc.learn.com/noaa> (refer to Mentor Training section course selection);
- providing guidance on technology, science, outreach, policy, operations, and/or research activities;
- conducting a mid-term assessment and providing the student scholar and program manager with comments; and completing a final evaluation of the internship and e-mail the results to Graduate.Opportunities@noaa.gov

Within the first two weeks of the internship, the NOAA mentor and scholar must complete and sign a Research Project Plan and e-mail the signed plan to the program manager at: Graduate.Opportunities@noaa.gov

As a potential mentor with a single opportunity and several inquiries, how do I determine which student intern is best suited for the position?

The selection process is similar to a job interview. Potential students may be asked about their skills; academic, scientific, and research interests; and their overall success in courses relevant to the NOAA mentor's project.

Is there training available for NOAA mentors?

Yes. NOAA employees who agree to serve as mentors are required to complete online mentor training if the training has not been completed in the past two years. Potential mentors in need of mentor training may visit the Commerce Learning Center (CLC) at: <https://doc.learn.com/noaa>. The CLC has web-based courses available. Recommend course: “*Essential Mentoring Techniques: Building and Maintaining Mentoring Relationships*”.

Can NOAA mentors have more than one graduate student intern?

NOAA mentors may host more than one student scholar provided each student scholar has a discreet project assigned to him/her.

Do NOAA mentors provide a NOAA Badge?

Yes. NOAA Badges are obtained for interns by the host offices. NOAA badges must be collected from the students at the end of the internship.

Will the NOAA mentor create a NOAA e-mail account for the student intern?

No. NOAA OED will create and maintain NOAA e-mail accounts for all student interns. The student scholars' email accounts will be maintained by the OFA Mail Admin Group and will not be transferred to the operating units.

Can the NOAA mentor change the internship project?

NOAA mentor may change the internship project with the student scholar and in coordination with the program manager. Project changes must be agreed upon by the NOAA mentor and graduate student.

Can the NOAA mentor assign multiple projects to the student intern?

Each student scholar must have one project that can be completed in the agreed upon timeframe.

Can the NOAA mentor pay for the student intern's travel to NOAA field sites and/or conferences?

Yes. If funds are available, NOAA mentors may support travel for students to NOAA field sites, conferences and meetings that would enhance the student's internship experience.

What is the NOAA program evaluation process?

At the end of the internship, NOAA mentors will receive an evaluation form from the OED program manager. NOAA mentors are asked to evaluate the intern's contribution to the research project and their performance during the internship. Students are also provided a separate evaluation form to provide feedback on their experience at NOAA and with the project mentor.