Sustainability Practicum – Program Requirement

The MS Sustainability Science (MS3) Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst is an accelerated, one-year master’s program designed to train highly-motivated students and professionals to be change-makers in the emerging sustainability field. A required and critical element of the MS3 Program is the Sustainability Practicum, a 4-credit, 150-hour internship. To receive credit for the practicum, you must enroll in ECO 698S or 698 and fulfill the requirements described below.

Purpose and goals
The practicum is the capstone experience of the MS3 Program. The purpose is to provide students with career training that allows you to apply your coursework in a real-world setting, learn from practitioners and leaders in the field, and build your professional experience while still in school. Ideally, you will produce a suite of products and/or outcomes during your internship that you can add to your professional portfolio. The goal is for you to emerge with applied experience, a refined set of skills, a broadened area of expertise, and a better understanding of the type of professional opportunities you are most interested in pursuing beyond graduate school.

How it works
The practicum can be paid or unpaid. Students usually enroll in the practicum course (ECO 698S or 698) during the Spring Semester and complete all the requirements by the end of the summer, although the timeframe can be extended. The course is pass/fail and you will receive an incomplete until the practicum requirements have been fulfilled. Once you have met the obligations of your internship outlined in your Learning Contract and completed the requirements outlined below, the final step is to ensure your academic record includes a passing grade for the practicum course. You will likely need to complete the Change of Grade Form to switch from an “incomplete” to a "pass" for the course. This form can be picked up at the ECo Main Office, filled out, signed by the Graduate Program Director, Craig Nicolson, and submitted to the Graduate School’s Student Service Center.

NB: The Graduate School cannot approve you for degree eligibility until you receive a passing grade for your practicum.

Practicum requirements
The following are the requirements needed to complete your practicum:

- **Secure an internship:** Students are responsible for finding and securing their own internship. This is an important first step to completing your practicum!

- **Develop a Learning Contract:** Working with your supervisor, you will develop a Learning Contract that identifies the scope of work, key responsibilities, timeline, and deliverables. The contract must be handed into the MS3 Program and approved.
• **Initiate a Midpoint Review** (optional): Students are encouraged to have a midpoint check-in with your supervisor to review the Learning Contract, assess progress, and refine goals/expectations, as needed.

• **Submit Final Project documentation:** The purpose of this internship is for you to document your work/outcomes in a brief report that you will (a) submit to the MS3 Program as a prerequisite for receiving a final grade for the Sustainability Practicum (see paperwork below!), and (b) be able to show prospective employers as evidence of your professional experience.

• **Ask your supervisor for a Final Evaluation:** A key part of your ongoing professional growth is seeking and acting on feedback from your peers and from those with more experience than you in your chosen field. Towards the end of the internship, therefore, you should ask your supervisor to complete an evaluation of your work and success relative to the Learning Contract. Many students include a brief reflection in their Final Report on “Lessons Learned” (or similar). We encourage you to do this, but it is not absolutely required.

• **Submit your paperwork (and your UMass keys)!** Once you have completed your internship, you must submit all the necessary paperwork to the MS3 Program, including the Final Evaluation, any final products, and the Change of Grade Form for the practicum course. You also need to return your keys for Holdsworth!

**Internship considerations**
Consistent with the MS3 Program’s philosophy, above all, the practicum should align with your interests and serve as a stepping stone toward your long-term professional and vocational goals. It should be a challenging professional experience suitable for a graduate-level student. The experience must involve you taking on responsibilities within the context of a broader project and/or an independent project. It should not be limited to clerical work. Please see the Resource List for a suggested list of companies and organizations to contact about an internship.