

Master Curating Art and Cultures UvA / VU

The internship

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Overview

The internship, which will be followed at one of the participating museums or cultural institutions, generally comprises six components (the 'six-point plan'). The actual content of the internship is always dependent on the nature, purpose and program of the institution and the department where the student is placed.

The following six points make up the framework for the internship:

- 1. Organization and policy**
- 2. Research, archival work, registration and making available of research results**
- 3. Art handling**
- 4. Restoration and conservation¹**
- 5. Representation and communication**
- 6. Production (exhibition, symposium or program, other kinds of presentations)**

At the beginning of the internship, the student, together with their institutional supervisor will make a plan for the year in which all six points are addressed. At the end of the internship, the student analyzes their experience with each of the six points in a series of reports of approximately 1000 words each, in which she/he describes and evaluates her/his personal experiences and activities using concrete examples. At this time, the student also writes an overall competence report. These documents together form the individual dossier, together with the attachments detailing the activities undertaken during the year.

The institutional supervisor is one of the institution's curators. Together with the university supervisor, she/he is responsible for the assessment.

The internship runs from 1 February to 31 January, interrupted by an excursion of approximately one week. The student works as a curator-in-training full-time from Monday to Thursday; Fridays are left free for following the modules *Curatorial Practices in the Contemporary World* (I and II). Holidays are taken in consultation with the internship supervisor. (The excursion does not count as holiday-time for the institution.)

The 'six-point plan' and reports

1. Organization and policy

The curator-in-training will become acquainted with the everyday practices of their museum or cultural institution. In addition to independently carrying out activities falling under points 2 to 6, the trainee will attend staff, curatorial and research meetings. The trainee is also expected to acquaint her/himself with the institution's annual reports, collection plans and other relevant policy papers.

¹ For those institutions without a collection, *Restoration and conservation* will form a smaller part of the internship, and fall under *Art handling*.

Report: Analysis of the organizational structure and institutional policy. What effect do the organizational structures and policies have on the institution's functioning as a whole and the departments among themselves? What is the place of the curator within the organization? What do you think are the positive and negative aspects of these structures? Have changes recently been made in organization and policy? Try to relate your report to practical examples that occurred during your internship.

2. Research, registration and disclosure of research results

Different types of research activities should be carried out during the internship, for example:

- object-oriented research or archival work (registration, description and documentation of objects or projects from the archive); acquiring knowledge of registration systems (Adlib or TMS) and the standardized terms used;
- research on acquisitions or acquisition policy; exploring the market for a specific (group), artist(s) or subject in relation to the collection; writing a proposal for an acquisition; preparing funding applications;
- scholarly research (which may result, for example, in the writing of an article or entry for a catalogue or a publication, magazine or digital platform);
- scholarly research into the cultural or social context of, or the discourse, on various subjects, artists or objects (which may result in the writing of a proposal for a public program, a symposium or an educational project).

NB: Research for exhibitions falls under point 6

Report: Analyze and evaluate the different types of research you have done. Consider, among other things, the following: what kind of research did you do, what kind of research did you enjoy doing the most and why? What was the purpose of the research and what were the target groups for the museum? How did you carry out the research and what kind of considerations did you have to make? What is the position of research within the institution and in the tasks of the curator (and should this perhaps be different)?

3. Art handling

The trainee will become acquainted with the movement of objects inside and outside the institution: internal displacements, visits to the depots or archives, art handling instructions and the preparation of condition reports. The trainee is expected to gain knowledge regarding lending policies and the acquisition of loans by, among others, attending meetings and observing the entire loan trajectory, from request to transport. The aim is to have the trainee act as courier at least once.

Report: Describe the loan procedures at your institution, with particular attention to the role of the curator in the decision-making process. When should a curator grant or reject a loan request? Who else takes part in the decision to grant a loan or not? What is the function of a courier during transport and installation?

4. Restoration and conservation

The trainee will acquire insight into the issues of conservation, collection management and restoration. These include aspects such as climate control, lighting problems, security, possible restrictions on the presentation of objects, etc. Working from the perspective of the curator, the trainee will take part in restoration and/or conservation projects and (preliminary) research.

Report: Analyze the considerations that precede the restoration of a work or archival documents and the role of the curator within this process. Report on the restoration process of one (or more) object(s) and the decisions taken.

5. Representation and communication

Here the trainee becomes acquainted with the representative side of curating by (for example) giving oral presentations such as lectures and guided tours for the public; talks for colleagues and scholars; or leading/attending press conferences. Among the tasks may also be writing press releases; formulating advice for private individuals; visiting workshops, exhibitions, symposiums, auction houses, dealers and trade fairs; as well as maintaining contacts with artists, scholars, collectors, colleague-institutions, private lenders and funding bodies. During the course of the year the trainee is expected to give at least one oral presentation.

Report: Evaluate your oral presentation(s) and reflect on the public dimension of curating. How does this aspect take shape in your museum or cultural institution, and how does the representative work relate to the content-oriented side of curating?

6. Production

In most cases this will take the form of an exhibition or (collection or object-based) presentation. However, it can also be the organization of a symposium, an educational program or the production of a publication. What kind of project the trainee works on will depend on the institution's programming. As a member of the project-team, the trainee takes part in all aspects of the organization: depending on the stage of the project, she/he can participate in the formulation of the concept, the choice of objects, the loan process, and the design phase, as well as in the writing of the catalogue and wall texts. This component requires cooperation with other departments and external parties.

Report: Evaluation and analysis of the production process and the different considerations and decisions taken in its course.

Self-evaluation

In addition to the aforementioned reports on the six aspects of your internship, you are also expected to write a short assessment (about 800 words) in which you evaluate and reflect on the knowledge, skills and insight you have gained throughout the year. This report is a good means of measuring what you have learned, which moments taught you the most, and to look critically at the results of the internship. How far do you feel you have come in understanding the various tasks of the curator? What do you still want or need to learn? What are your strong points as a curator, and where are your weaknesses?

Use the following overview of curatorial qualifications. These have been formulated by the supervisors in the museums and cultural institutions participating in our program and are based on current job descriptions for the post of curator.

A curator has the following tasks: the management, development, scientific processing and presentation of the collection for which she or he is responsible. For these four core activities the following qualifications are required.

The curator:

1. knows the value of a good registration and documentation of the collection and knows how to take care of said collection. Likewise, she or he understands the considerations and processes of granting loans;
2. has knowledge of and is capable of ensuring that the condition of (art) objects is preserved, both in and outside of the museum;
3. has sufficient knowledge to make decisions regarding the condition and treatment of an (art) object, in consultation with the restorer;
4. is capable of doing research into individual (art) objects and can report on this research in both oral and written form;
5. has knowledge of the relevant scholarly field and related research projects and contacts;

6. is capable of contributing to the scholarly field and to formulate research projects in relationship to the collection;
7. has sufficient knowledge of the art market, the Dutch National Collection ("de collectie Nederland"), and the procedures for the formulation of acquisition proposals, and can assess the value of donations and gifts;
8. is able to contribute to the formulation of exhibition projects, collections presentations and publications;
9. can work in a project-based fashion;
10. is able to participate constructively in various relevant committees and other forms of consultation.

University supervision

The supervisor

Your university supervisor is the coordinator of the program at the university at which you are enrolled: for the UvA either Rachel Esner or Mia Lerm Hayes; for the VU Ingrid Vermeulen.

Work plan

During a first meeting (mid/end February), the work plan - worked out in detail with the supervising curator in the first week - will be discussed. On the basis of these discussions, points may be revised, after which the work plan can be submitted, together with the internship contract, to the supervisors at the university and the institution. The work plan serves as a guide for the following meetings.

Internship contract

Internship contracts will be drawn up and signed. A copy of the contract can then be handed over to the university supervisor. Trainees will receive financial compensation for their work. Please be aware that the exact amount may differ, depending on your institution. The same applies to travel costs: some institutions will remunerate you for travel, others may be unable to do so.

Supervision meetings

The frequency of supervision meetings will be decided at the first meeting. As a general guideline, the trainee and her/his institutional supervisor will meet with the university supervisor every two to three months, for example: February - April - June - September - December.

It is up to the trainee to arrange these meetings in a timely fashion.

Before the meeting, the trainee will submit a list of her/his activities since the previous meeting, following the scheme of the 'six-point plan'. The trainee makes a short report and action-point plan of each meeting; this will be sent to both supervisors.

At the halfway point of the internship, the two supervisors and the trainee will hold an assessment of the trainee's progress. In preparation of the assessment meeting the trainee submits a list of activities since the previous meeting, a short self-evaluation based on the above-mentioned curatorial qualifications (max. 1 A4) and a brief evaluation of the institutional supervision. The institutional supervisor writes a short assessment of the trainee's progress (max. 1 A4).

Documentation and reflection

It is highly recommended that you record your impressions and experiences throughout the year, for example in a diary or notebook. In addition, keep good track of all documentation that you will need for your final dossier.

Assignment: first impression

Finally, as a first assignment, we ask you to write a short description (one page) of the first two weeks of your internship. In it you should outline your expectations for the year and give your first impressions of your institution. This reflection should be emailed no later than February 14 to both your institutional supervisor and the program coordinators at both the UvA and VU.

