

## COURSE GUIDE

### **Internship Soil Biology**

SBL-70424 (70427, 70430, 70433, 70436, 70439)



Soil Biology Group

<https://www.wur.nl/en/Research-Results/Chair-groups/Environmental-Sciences/Soil-Biology-Group.htm>



**WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY**  
**WAGENINGEN UR**

## **Internship Soil Biology** (SBL-70424)

Language of instruction:	English <sup>1</sup>
Study load / Credit points:	24 ects (also internships of 27, 30, 33, 36 and 39 ects are possible)
Period/time:	any time of the year
Coordinator / supervisor:	prof.dr. R.E. Creamer
Examiner <sup>2</sup> :	prof.dr. R.E. Creamer
Examination:	Professional skills (35%) Report of the internship (35%) Self-reflection on internship (10%) Presentation (10%) Oral exam (10%)

### **Profile of the internship:**

The academic internship is a period of work, study and reflection in a real-world working environment. The aim of the academic internship is to let you experience the potential professional environment in which you could work after graduating from your degree programme. The internship provides an opportunity to work outside Wageningen University at a host organisation, e.g. a company (consultancy firm, industry, etc.), a public institution, a research organisation, another university, or a non-governmental organisation. The tasks you complete have to be of a sufficiently high standard to reflect the desired level of recent Wageningen graduates. You could, for example, work on a research project, a policy document, a communication plan, an evaluation report, a design, or education materials, to name a few.

### **Learning outcomes**

After completion of the internship you are expected to be able to:

- apply knowledge and skills acquired during your study in a working environment;
- expand your professional network;
- work independently with commitment and perseverance; show initiative;
- handle feedback and ask for it timely;
- reflect on your functioning within an organisation;
- adapt to a new working environment and work with a feeling for the organisation;
- plan and keep to a time schedule;
- present major results of your work in writing and orally in a comprehensive manner for a specific audience (preferably the hosting institution).

---

<sup>1</sup> According to the Education and Examination Regulations of Wageningen University the internship report must be written in English; only by explicit approval of the Examining Board a report in a different language is admitted

<sup>2</sup> According to the Education and Examination Regulations of Wageningen University an internship will be assessed by two persons working on an academic level, of which one is the examiner from Wageningen University. The other assessor normally comes from the hosting institution.

In addition to the above-mentioned learning outcomes, you define *your own specific learning outcomes* in consultation and agreement with your Wageningen University supervisor. For example, you can define personal or technical skills that you would like to (further) develop during your internship.

### **Is Soil Biology allowed to supervise the internship?**

Consult the description of your MSc programme in the Study Handbook and your study advisor whether we are allowed to supervise you. If you find an internship that does not meet this criterion, but which you consider relevant for your programme, contact your study advisor and ask for approval by the Examining Board.

### **How to find an internship?**

First discuss the planning of your programme including your internship with your study adviser. Generally, it is a good idea to start searching for an internship at least three months in advance, and at least six months in advance if you plan to do your internship abroad.

For a first exploration of potential internships, ask fellow students about their internship experience, ask lecturers for contacts, read professional journals or the internet to find names of possible internship providers. Then contact the internship coordinator of the Chair Group for help with internship opportunities, or support for the internship opportunities you found. If necessary, (s)he can introduce you to the organisation hosting the internship. Finally, you contact the internship provider to discuss opportunities for working on an internship. It is part of the learning process that you are actively engaged in the search for an appropriate internship position, and that you organise all the arrangements with the internship provider yourself. Usually you will write or phone the preferred internship provider asking for possible internships. It is common to send a motivation letter and CV. This is also the phase where you involve the internship coordinator in the process. Should there be common ground, then you will usually be invited to an interview as part of the application process. You should have a clear idea about your personal learning outcomes as input for your interview. The experience of finding an internship also is valuable practice for a future job application. Before you start the internship, you and your internship supervisor have to agree on the kind of work to be done; this will be included in the internship contract.

### **Level and approval**

The internship tasks have to be at an appropriate academic level. The description of the task(s) should match the level of what can be expected from a recently graduated MSc student in your field of expertise. Before the start of your internship, you should be in possession of a detailed description of the work involved and that it has been approved by the Wageningen University supervisor. In addition, you should be officially registered as an MSc student at Wageningen University for the duration of your internship.

### **Internship Contract and Learning Agreement**

Use the Wageningen University internship contract and learning agreement. If the internship provider requires you to fill in their own contract, then please do so, but this must always be in addition to the university's learning agreement in which the supervision and learning outcomes are agreed. The internship contract should be signed by the student, the internship supervisor of the hosting institute, and the supervisor from the chair group. The learning agreement should be signed by you and your chair group supervisor.

## **Supervision**

During your internship you will have two supervisors:

1. The *internship supervisor* is your supervisor on behalf of the internship provider. He/she will guide you through your daily activities and give feedback on your performance. Preferably, your internship supervisor is a university graduate.
2. The *university supervisor* advises and supports you before the start of the internship, e.g. on defining specific personal learning outcomes, finding an internship position that meets these goals, clarifying questions concerning the internship, and assessing your performance at the end of the internship. If you experience difficulties during the internship that cannot be discussed with the internship supervisor, do not hesitate to contact the university supervisor who is there to help if difficulties arise.

For a successful internship, it is important that you not only discuss progress with the internship provider, but also that you regularly inform the university supervisor. Therefore, you should discuss (via phone/ Skype/ email) your progress and performance with your internship provider and university supervisor at least twice (e.g. after one month and towards the end of the internship). In addition, regular contact (e.g. monthly) between you and your university supervisor is important to discuss progress in terms of internship tasks and personal learning goals, planning the next phase, and any other issues that may have arisen during the internship. It is important that you take initiative to inform the university supervisor and ask for specific feedback that the supervisor then can provide.

Before the start of the internship, you, your internship supervisor and the university supervisor agree on the number and frequency of contacts and means of feedback. This will be included in the learning agreement.

## **Activities during the internship**

During your internship you will work on one or more tasks/projects provided by the internship provider. You will have a position equal to a junior employee at an academic level. You can work on tasks leading to one main deliverable or on tasks leading to several deliverables. It is also possible that you contribute to joint deliverables in which the individual contributions are not clearly demarcated.

### *Portfolio of deliverables*

You have to build up a portfolio that contains the internship deliverables, such as a research report, a policy document, a communication plan, an evaluation report, a design, or educational material, as agreed with your supervisor(s) in the learning agreement. In case of poorly demarcated contributions to joint deliverables, describe what your contributions were and the process which led to that result. In cases where the portfolio is not report itself, a report describing theoretical perspectives used, reflection on choices made, relevance, conclusions and recommendations, may be required by the university supervisor(s) to assess at what level you achieved your learning outcomes.

The portfolio and/or the report may be labelled 'confidential' by the internship provider. Before starting the internship, you, the internship provider and the university supervisor will agree on and sign a confidentiality agreement. Confidential products will be stored by Wageningen University, but will not be accessible for third parties without prior consent of the internship provider.

### *Personal reflection Report*

In addition to the portfolio with deliverables, you have to write a report in which you reflect upon the internship itself (i.e. content, organisation, company, country, etc.) and especially on your functioning within the organisation and the personal goals you formulated in consultation with the university supervisor. For this report, you will be guided by your university supervisor. Questions that could be addressed in your personal reflection report are:

- Which personal goals did you define?
- What activities did you perform to attain these learning outcomes?
- Did the activities all together help you achieve the learning outcomes and your personal goals?
- How do you evaluate your performance on these activities?
- Could you have done things in another way? And if so how?
- What did you experience as your strong and weak points?
- What can you do to improve your weak points?
- How can you use your strong points to strengthen your other skills?
- Which gaps did you identify in your personal knowledge and skills with respect to the activities you had to perform?
- Did you perform the activities in a team and, if yes, what was your contribution?
- How well did you function in the team?
- What were your strong and weak point in cooperation?
- How will you use your strong and weak points to improve cooperation?
- Did you get good insights in the structure of the organisation, and did you feel a part of it?
- What were your experiences with the culture and structure of the organisation?
- Is there a code of conduct? Did you and your colleagues in the organisation comply with the code of conduct and professional ethical standards of the internship organisation? Did you encounter other ethical issues?

In general, the report should at least contain an explanation of the learning outcomes formulated at the start of the internship, a critical evaluation of the extent to which these outcomes were reached (including the activities relevant for each of them), and a set of new learning outcomes, formulated during and at the end of the internship. Obviously, the content of the report is much more important than its length, but as a rule of thumb, a personal reflection report should at least cover two pages / 1250 words.

### *Oral presentation*

At the end of your internship, you are expected to give an oral presentation to the internship provider. The internship supervisor is expected to attend your presentation and provide feedback. If possible, the university supervisor will also be present. If not, the presentation should preferably be shared digitally via skype, video conference, or a recording of the actual presentation. A copy of the slides should be sent to the university supervisor.

### *Examination*

After finishing your portfolio of deliverables, your personal reflection report and the oral presentation, you will have an oral defence with your internship examiner. The internship supervisor is allowed to be present as well, but this is not obligatory. In the defence, you will be assessed on the extent you have mastered your internship subject and the quality of your reflection on the internship project. The portfolio of products, the personal reflection report and

a copy of the oral presentation and a written (non-binding) advice of the internship supervisor must be provided to the examiner before the defence.

### **Assessment of the internship**

Wageningen University is responsible for the assessment and the final grade. The internship supervisor must provide an evaluation of your performance during your internship and a non-binding advice about the grade. However, the advice from your internship supervisor may differ from the grade given by the examiner due to differences in expectations and assessment of your work between the supervisors, and differences in grading levels between organisations and countries. The assessment will be based on five elements:

- Professional skills (35%)
- Internship Report (35%)
- Self-reflection on the internship (10%)
- Presentation (10%)
- Oral exam (10%)

For assessment by the university supervisor and examiner, the Wageningen University Assessment Form and rubric (<https://portal2.wur.nl/sites/OWI/Lists/links5/AllItems.aspx>) is used.

### **Insurance**

A 'normal' travel accident and luggage insurance may not be sufficient if you go abroad for your internship. You may want to use the free WUR travel accident and luggage insurance if you go on an internship abroad. For more information, go to the Student Service Centre (SSC). This insurance is applicable only during the actual internship; if you plan to travel after your internship, you will need to take out a personal travel insurance for that purpose. It is not wise to have two insurances at the same time as there can be disagreement on which insurer should pay in case of an accident. Therefore, if you have a (continuous) travel insurance policy, you should cancel that for the period of your study abroad, but make sure that it is reinstated when you start your travels after your internship.

You have to ensure that your own health insurance has world coverage.

All students automatically have a liability insurance (=WA verzekering) during study activities (lab work, field work etc.), but not during their leisure time.

### **Safety**

If you do your internship abroad, you have to comply with the Wageningen UR travel policy. Consequently, if you travel to so-called risky areas (as defined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) you need written permission by the director of the Environmental Sciences Group. The internship coordinator will explain the rules, provide you with the form and will take care of the formal request.

### **Grants**

For information about grants see the following websites:

<http://www.beursopener.nl/content/index.asp> (unfortunately in Dutch only)

<https://www.wur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/master/Study-grants.htm>

<https://www.wur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/Current-Students/Travel-Funding.htm>

There is often substantial underspending for Erasmus travel grants for internships in Europe. Contact the Erasmus coordinator for possibilities.

## **Checklist for organising an internship**

- 1. At least three months, but for internships abroad, at least six months before the planned start of the internship:**
  - Orientate yourself on possible internships.
  - Make an appointment with the internship coordinator. Prepare for the meeting by reading this course guide and formulating personal goals and ideas about preferred internship providers.
  - Prepare a motivation letter and CV for an internship position at the selected internship providers.
  - Contact potential internship providers.
  - Find an internship supervisor at the internship provider.
  - Contact the university supervisor for approval.
  - Inform other involved internship providers that a position elsewhere has been accepted.
  - Discuss the exact internship tasks with the university supervisor and the internship supervisor.
  - If all applications are rejected, contact the university supervisor to discuss other options.
- 2. One month before start of internship:**
  - Fill in the Wageningen University internship contract or the internship contract of the internship provider together with your supervisors, and send the signed contract to the internship coordinator.
  - Fill in the Wageningen University learning agreement in consultation with the internship supervisor and the university supervisor. It may take a few drafts before the learning agreement is approved.
- 3. One month after the start of the internship:**
  - Organise a meeting (in person, by e-mail or skype) between the internship and university supervisors and between you and university supervisor (separately) to discuss content, progress, personal performance, problems and cultural issues.
- 4. Monthly during the internship:**
  - Send an e-mail to your university supervisor about your wellbeing, progress, personal goals, and your plans for the next month.
- 5. At least one month before the end of the internship:**
  - Arrange a day, time and location for the oral presentation (at the internship provider).
  - Arrange a day, time and location for the defence with your university supervisor.
- 6. Approximately three weeks before the end of the internship:**
  - Provide a draft portfolio of products to the internship provider for a check on a correct representation of the organisation and projects, and on confidentiality.
- 7. One week before the defence:**
  - Submit the portfolio of products, the personal reflection report, your student number and internship code, and a copy of the oral presentation to the internship supervisor and university supervisor and examiner.
  - Check your approved study programme (SPA) for the correct internship code and make sure this code is noted on the evaluation form by the university supervisor.
  - The internship supervisor will send the signed evaluation form of the student's performance to the university supervisor.
- 8. After the defence:**
  - The university supervisor will make sure the mark is registered at SSC. Please note that advance registration for the internship at SSC by the student is not needed.
  - Check that the internship code that is given corresponds to the code in your approved study programme (SPA).
- \* Extra for internships abroad:**
  - Permission to travel to risky areas (when applicable)
  - If possible apply for grants.
  - Make sure you have the right vaccinations for the travel destination(s).
  - Arrange proper insurance.
  - Timely apply for a student visa if necessary.
  - Arrange travel tickets.
  - Arrange housing.
  - Fill in the 'OV studentenkaart buitenland' and hand in the OV card in order to receive a refund of travelling costs (for Dutch students only).