

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
NON-VANDERBILT INTERNS AND OBSERVERS
FAQS

- **Are interns or observers considered Vanderbilt employees?**
No. The experience is intended to be educational, to provide insight into the workings of a major research university and help expose students to potential career paths, and to be time-limited. Interns and observers are not eligible to receive Vanderbilt benefits, are not eligible for workers compensation, and must provide proof of health insurance.
- **Can interns or observers be paid?**
Interns are, by definition, those engaged in such an experience who receive a fellowship or compensation of some kind. In general, interns are paid via stipend if permitted by the sponsor¹. Observers by definition are not paid.
- **If someone wants to observe, and isn't being paid, why do all these forms have to be filled out?**
The registration form, statement of agreement, and emergency contact information are all important to help protect the intern or observer. Since these are often students and, in some cases, minors, the faculty sponsor and designated supervisor need to know how to contact family should an emergency arise. They are also important to ensure the intern or observer's educational goals are met by the experience.
- **What happens if an intern or observer gets sick or is injured while participating in their experience?**
If something should happen, the faculty sponsor or designated supervisor should use his or her best judgment as to whether or not the person needs to go to the emergency room. If someone does go to the emergency room, the sponsor or supervisor should notify the relevant department chair or dean. Please remember: Because interns and observers are not Vanderbilt employees, they are not eligible for workers compensation, and must provide proof of health insurance.
- **Does this process apply to Vanderbilt students?**
No – currently enrolled Vanderbilt students are hired using the normal process.
- **Can Vanderbilt students who have graduated participate as interns or observers?**
Yes. As long as they are not currently enrolled at Vanderbilt, and can demonstrate a reasonable end date due to another commitment (such as graduate school or military service), recent graduates and former students may participate. They must provide documentation to support the end date for the experience.
- **Can foreign nationals participate as interns or observers?**
Yes, but it is the responsibility of the sponsor and his/her department to verify that all legal visa requirements are satisfied prior to requesting appointment. Please note, student visas (F-1s) usually do not allow for employment outside the student's educational institution.

¹ Generally stipend payments do not have taxes withheld (this can vary for international recipients). By January 31 of each year, HR Processing will send every stipend recipient a letter regarding taxability and what forms if any to expect from Vanderbilt.

- **Do interns and observers have to complete safety training?**

Yes, they have to complete whatever safety training is normally required for faculty and students working in the laboratory, studio, or facility. Furthermore, Tennessee law prohibits minors from having access to certain hazardous workplace settings. If the faculty sponsor or designated supervisor has any questions concerning potential hazards, proper personal protection equipment, or training, they should contact [Vanderbilt Environmental Health and Safety](#) (VEHS) directly at (32)2.2057.

- **What about other training?**

Faculty sponsors and designated supervisors must also ensure appropriate training if the person is working with: human subjects ([Vanderbilt Human Research Protection Program](#)); animals ([Vanderbilt Animal Care and Use Program](#)); student information ([FERPA](#) training); or patient information ([HIPAA](#) training).

- **What if the interns or observers are minors?**

Anyone interacting with minors must complete all relevant department, school, and institutional requirements prior to the intern or observer starting his/her experience. This includes having a background check completed and accepted by Vanderbilt prior to beginning work with minors. Complete information about working with minors can be found at the [Protection of Minors website](#) (vunetid and password required). For additional information, contact the office directly at (93)6.0660 or protectionofminors@vanderbilt.edu.