



Certificate in Religion and Public Life Internships Background Information for Potential Sites

The two-year Certificate in Religion and Public Life (CRPL), offered by the Religion and Public Life (RPL) program at Harvard Divinity School, is designed to prepare HDS graduates with the tools, skills, and experience to explore professional pathways outside of traditional ministry or academic scholarship.

A critical component of the certificate is a required internship. This internship should provide students with relevant work experience related to their area of professional concentration. Additionally, internships should provide opportunities for students to gain skill and experience in communicating and demonstrating how a robust understanding of religion enhances professional and civic competence within a particular profession, for the cause of just peace. The professions CRPL focuses on are: community organizing, humanitarian action, journalism, media and entertainment, government, and education.

Religion and Public Life seeks appropriate internship settings for Harvard Divinity School students pursuing the Certificate in Religion and Public Life.

“This internship provides an invaluable opportunity for students to connect their work at the Divinity School and in the Religion & Public Life program to the larger global community, and experience how organizations are grappling with some of the most challenging aspects of religion and society. Our team was grateful for the thoughtful, nuanced approach our intern took in their work as a result of the program's philosophy, and we are better for it.”

– Religion and Society Program,
Aspen Institute

“The students from HDS are motivated, passionate, and self-starters. The HDS students quickly became an integral part of our team and have left long-lasting contributions to our work. We truly hope to work with more HDS students in the future.”

–International Center for Religion and
Diplomacy

RPL Internship FAQs

What form can the internship take?

Internships can take multiple forms, including but not restricted to the following:

- Working with an organization or agency related to a profession
- Working in a research capacity with a particular professional, faculty member, fellow, or instructor
- Working in a relevant apprentice role with an established artist, filmmaker, or activist
- Internships can be domestic or international. While residency is preferred, remote internships with appropriate structure and supervision will be considered.

What is the time requirement for the student?

The CRPL internship requires 280 hours of work and can be fulfilled as follows:

- Full-time summer placement (35 hours per week for 8 weeks)
- Extended part-time placement (10 hours per week for 28 weeks)*
- Full-time “J-Term” followed by part-time spring semester placement (35 hours per week for 3 weeks in January, followed by 12.5 hours for 14 weeks)**

The 280-hour CRPL work requirement includes onsite supervision. It does not include travel time, preparation time, or time involved in professional reflection and reporting.

CRPL calendar internships options include:

- Summer, full time (May/June–Aug)
- Extended, part time*
 - Fall, Spring (Sept–May)
 - Spring, Fall (Jan/Feb–May, Sept–Dec)
 - Spring, Summer (Jan/Feb–Aug)
 - Summer, Fall (June–Dec)
- J-term full time, Spring semester part time (Jan-May)**

By which date must a student have their internship secured?

Students must identify their internship setting and apply for its approval to the RPL on the following schedule:

- June start date (summer and summer/fall options): first Monday of April
- September start date (fall/spring): first Monday of June
- January start date (Jan/Feb–May, Sept–Dec): first Monday of November

*Extended part-time placements are generally limited to a context where a full-time summer placement is not feasible (e.g., working with a secondary-school educator). We strongly encourage students to pursue full-time summer internships.

** Full time January-term and part time spring semester internships are permitted in particular circumstances.

What does the internship application require?

By the above application date, students are required to have completed an internship placement contract with their intended setting. Students are expected to work with their intended supervisor to fashion an internship proposal and placement contract following a template provided by RPL. The application includes:

- Placement details (organization, start and end date, site supervisor)
- Project details (learning goals, responsibilities, any specific expectations)

We recognize that full project details may not always be available in advance.

The student's proposal and placement contract should contain as much detail as possible.

What kind of preparation will students have prior to the internship?

Students are required to have completed a Religious Literacy and the Professions course with Prof. Diane L. Moore prior to their internship. In this course, they will have been introduced to relevant frameworks and worked closely with [two expert fellows](#) -- one in their professional area of interest (either government, humanitarian action, entertainment media, journalism, education, or organizing), and a second in an issue area related to just peace (racial justice, immigrant rights, climate justice, and Native and Indigenous rights).

How are students placed in particular internship sites?

RPL provides students a list of approved internship sites. Students are invited to reach out to the contact person at settings of interest to introduce themselves and inquire about internship possibilities. The organization may receive multiple student inquiries. We encourage the internship site to interview interested students and select the best candidate.

On some occasions, a student might pursue an organizational setting that is not on the approved list. In this case, the student must consult with the Associate Director of the Religious Literacy and the Professions Initiative to discuss the setting and its potential as a site to obtain the necessary skills and experience, and so to obtain initial approval. Final approval for the internship setting is still contingent on approval of the internship application.

Are the students expected to be compensated?

Yes. Students must receive at least \$5000 for their internship. In settings that are unable to provide compensation, students can apply for a stipend from RPL. Note that some students are eligible for federal work study funding through Harvard. If eligible, the host organization will need to sign a federally-mandated Outside Agency Form, provided by RPL.

How are internship sites approved?

In selecting appropriate internship sites, RPL considers the following criteria:

- Internship settings must provide students with the opportunity to employ and hone the skills and knowledge they developed in the Religious Literacy and the Professions course.
- While recognizing that interns' specific responsibilities will be determined given their experience and capacities, we expect students to do more than pure administrative work.
- The setting must have an identified supervisor who will work with the student throughout the life of the project and complete supervisory requirements (see below).
- The setting must be in the professional arenas that are the foci of the RPL.
- The setting and work must provide opportunities to support efforts advancing just peace.

What requirements do the students have to complete?

The time requirement is 280 hours for the internship. Students will be expected to have regular supervision from someone at their internship site. In addition, they will engage in regular supervision with members of the RPL staff at HDS, and group reflection via written posts and regular virtual group check-ins with other HDS students conducting internships. Students will complete a final reflection paper to RPL at the end of their internship and an evaluation of the internship site experience for RPL.

What are the supervisory requirements and expectations?

Students must receive direct supervision from their on-site employer. This should include one hour/week of supervision and professional mentoring. This supervisor will be expected to participate in a short orientation session with RPL prior to the start of the student's internship to become familiar with CRPL frameworks and expectations. The time requirement for this orientation is approximately two hours. It's expected that the student works with the same supervisor throughout the internship. Supervisors are also asked to complete an evaluation of the student at the conclusion of the internship.

How will supervisors be supported?

The supervisor orientation session will provide space for connecting with other supervisors and RPL staff, and for answering questions prior to the start of the internship period. The Associate Director for Religious Literacy and the Professions will be on-call throughout the internship period to answer further questions or assist supervisors as needed.

Further questions?

Please contact Susie Hayward, RPL Associate Director for Religious Literacies and the Professions at shayward@hds.harvard.edu