

Maine Space Grant Consortium (MSGC)
MERITS Program
Guidelines for Mentors and Host Institutions

Overview: According to the MERITS program goals, effective practice at the local internship sites is expected to include: sufficient preparation and orientation for interns, active involvement of interns in a “research team” with specific job tasks suited to their skills, in a context where they are both able to increase their knowledge and are supported in bringing their experience into their educational and career plans. MERITS objective is to increase awareness of Maine students and teachers of research skills and the opportunities available in the state. “Research” is understood to include monitoring, production and educational projects for MERITS interns.

Effective Practices:

1. Goals and responsibilities:
 - a. Be aware of and clearly articulate the MERITS goals. With familiarity and commitment to their roles and responsibilities, mentors are better able to provide and supervise a successful research experience.
2. Orientation and preparation:
 - a. Adequately prepare space, resources, and other supports for interns in anticipation of their arrival
 - b. Quickly integrate arriving interns into the workings of the site, introduce them to work colleagues and bring them up to speed on their projects
 - c. Provide access to all the information, research papers, data, and tools needed to get oriented and “on-board” with the research/work ahead of time.
3. Meeting the needs of interns while meeting the needs of mentors and the research project:
 - a. Mentors share research project outcomes/facility objectives with the interns
 - b. Interns meet with their mentors to determine the scope of their work and to choose which component of research they will work on
 - c. Interns and mentors meet regularly (weekly or more) to discuss progress on the research.
 - d. Mentors provide other researchers, graduate students, or personnel to whom interns can go for guidance if the mentor is not available.
4. Interns as Researchers:
 - a. Mentors make sure that the interns are authentically involved in the project, even if the skills are not as advanced as expected.
 - b. Sometimes interns have other skills necessary to the success of the project. Encourage their participation in these areas of strength, i.e., computing, outreach, etc.

In Summary: The most successful interns feel like an integral member of the research team, understand how their work fits into the whole, and have the supports and resources to carry out their work.