

8.3 Self-Assessment Questions and Tools

Self-Assessment Questions and Tools

Several chapters, including the one by Lowenthal and Sosland, mention that interns (like all of us) learn more deeply when they consciously ask themselves what they have learned and what they have yet to learn. Below are questions, drawn from various sources, for interns to use in performing self-assessments at different points in the internship process.

Note to the intern: before you begin, how well do you know yourself? Consider taking a personality test that helps you reflect on what you value and what interests you, and understand how your attributes, values, and interests map onto different kinds of work. A campus career center advisor can direct you to these resources and the assessment instruments they have vetted are usually free to students. Links to other online assessments are listed at the end of this document. Although these questionnaires are not likely to reveal your “perfect fit” with a job or type of work, they can help you identify what kinds of work environments you may find more fulfilling and help narrow your job search.¹

A) Questions to be asked **before searching** for an internship:

- How do I find a job that I like or maybe even love?
- How can I make a difference in the world?
- What do I want to grow into?
- What kinds of work make me feel satisfied, enthusiastic, or inspired to do more?
- Which of my accomplishments or recent successes in college give me the most satisfaction? What do I think made them most successful?
- What are my top five skills? Which of these skills do I want to hone?
- Are there other skills I want to develop in an internship?
- Where do I see myself using my skills in a career?
- What do I see myself doing in the next five years?
- How do I envision balancing my job/internship/career with my academic and family (or other caregiving) obligations?

B) Questions to be asked **every working day** (Burnett and Evans 2020)²:

- What did I learn?
- What are the differences between what I observed in the field and what I learned in class?
- What did I initiate?
- What people did I help? How did I contribute to the organization?

¹ Foss, Erica. 2021. “Five Questions You Need to Ask Yourself Before Taking Another Self-Assessment Test.” The Muse, n.d. Accessed July 15, 2021. <https://www.themuse.com/advice/5-questions-you-need-to-ask-yourself-before-taking-another-selfassessment-test>.

² Burnett, Bill, and Dave Evans. 2020. *Designing Your Work Life: How to Thrive and Change and Find Happiness at Work*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

C) Questions to be asked **periodically**, at least at middle and end of internship, but more often if desired, should help the intern discern how true each of the following is for them.³

Development of Political Science Knowledge and Skills:

- I gained a good deal of fact-based knowledge in this internship.
- I learned to identify main points and central issues in the area of my internship.
- I gained a better understanding of concepts and principles that are core to the political science discipline, such as power, authority, governance, self-governance, liberty, fairness, and equality, among others.
- I developed an understanding of ethical issues are common in public affairs.
- I learned how different perspectives on race, class, gender, and culture add to political science.
- I improved my ability to identify and analyze problems.
- I learned to evaluate the quality of work in this field.
- I developed the ability to give appropriate evaluations of others' work.
- I developed the ability to solve real problems by applying what I have learned in college.
- I improved my research skills in my internship.
- I developed the ability to carry out original research in my internship.
- I developed the ability to communicate clearly about the area of my internship.
- I improved my writing skills through my internship.
- I improved my quantitative reasoning skills in my internship.
- I improved my organizational and time management skills in my internship.
- I learned to identify formal characteristics of work in my internship.
- I developed creative ability in my internship.
- I gained a broader understanding of my major by doing this internship.

Self-understanding:

- I gained a better understanding of myself through this experience.
- I increased my awareness of my own interests and skills.
- I developed confidence in myself.
- I increased my awareness of my own interests and talents.
- I gained an understanding of some of my personal concerns.
- I developed a greater sense of personal responsibility.

Development of Interests:

- I deepened my interest in the field of my internship.
- I developed my enthusiasm for the field in which my internship is situated.
- I was stimulated to discuss related topics outside of class.

³ Excerpted from course evaluation questions at American University, online at <https://www.american.edu/provost/oira/set/qbank.cfm>, and from the Lowenthal and Sosland chapter in this book.

Development of Social Skills and Attitudes:

- I developed leadership skills in this internship.
- I developed greater awareness of societal problems.
- I became interested in community projects related to my internship.
- I learned to value my own viewpoints.
- I learned to consider the viewpoints of my colleagues in this internship.
- I reconsidered some of my former attitudes.

Development of Professional Skills and Attitudes:

- I was introduced to important professional perspectives by guest lecturers or coworkers.
- I developed the specialized skills needed by professionals in this field.
- I learned about career opportunities.
- I developed a clearer sense of professional identity, or a better sense of how I want to make a mark in this field.

Other Self-Assessment Tools

Additional online assessment tools⁴ are listed below. Please be aware that not all assessment tools are reliable or valid.

- **[16 PERSONALITIES](#)**: This questionnaire describes different personality types that are reflected in personal motivation to work and help users understand their strengths and weaknesses. A basic test is free: www.16personalities.com
- **[CAREER BELIEFS INVENTORY \(CBI\)](#)**: This career counseling tool can help students recognize preexisting beliefs and attitudes that could constrain their career choices. It can be self-scored for free. See: <https://prezi.com/fx7didwptftm/career-beliefs-inventory/>
- The **[CAREER INTERESTS GAME](#)**, developed by the Career Center at the University of Missouri in conjunction with Dr. John Holland: <https://career.missouri.edu/career-interest-game/>.
- **[HUMANMETRICS](#)**, a series of questions based on Briggs-Myers's and Jung's typological approach to personality assessment: <http://www.humanmetrics.com/personality>
- **[O*NET PROFILER](#)**, developed through the US Department of Labor and sponsored by the Employment and Training Administration, helps the user identify their interests and how they relate to the working world: <https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>
- **[THE VALUES TEST](#)** – This assessment tool can help students learn what is important to them in a job or career by helping identify underlying work needs and motivations. Free at: <https://www.myplan.com/assess/values.php>

⁴ The inclusion of these tools does not constitute an explicit endorsement of them. These references and links are included so that faculty can make comparisons and appropriate recommendations for students in need of direction.

- [VT CAREER EXPLORATION TOOLS](https://career.vt.edu/exploring/self-assessment.html): For more self-assessment for career exploration tools, visit the Career and Professional Development Office on your campus, search for tools through other universities, or explore the collection at Virginia Tech: <https://career.vt.edu/exploring/self-assessment.html>

How to cite this resource: No Author. 2021. "Supplemental Internship Resource: Self-Assessment Questions and Tools," in *Political Science Internships: Towards Best Practices* eds. Renée B. Van Vechten, Bobbi Gentry, and John C. Berg. Washington, DC: American Political Science Association.