

USP 186/187 FAQs

Academic planning related questions:

- **Prerequisites for 186/187**

USP 186 has five prerequisites: USP 30*, USP 60*, USP 124, the research methods, and the technical elective. All three courses need to be completed by the end of the summer before USP 186. USP 186 is the prerequisite for USP 187.

*USP 30 and USP 60 were added as prerequisites for students completing USP 186 in Fall 2025 and later. The previous lower div stats class will also be accepted for continuing students and transfer students that completed it at their community college prior to transferring to UCSD. USP 30 has important scaffolding to help students prepare for their internship search.

- **Drop deadlines**

USP 186 and 187 are subject to the same drop deadlines as other courses at UCSD: Friday of week four. It is important to note that USP 186 and 187 are each only offered once per year and are designed to be taken back to back. Before dropping either class, please reach out to USP's Academic Advising team in the Virtual Advising Center (vac.ucsd.edu) to discuss your options and potential impacts to your time to degree.

- **If I don't pass USP 186 in Fall quarter what happens?**

USP 186 is the prerequisite for USP 187. If a student doesn't pass USP 186 with a C- or better, they will need to retake the course in the following year. Students who are concerned about passing USP 186 or 187 should reach out to the instructor and TA as soon as possible to discuss options and ways to stay on track in the course. It is rare that a student fails the sequence if they are communicating with the instructor early.

Research project related questions:

- **Do I need to know what I'll be researching before I start 186?**

No, you do not need to know what you'll be researching before you start 186, but it will certainly help to have a rough idea. This will enable you to hit the ground running. To generate some topic ideas refer to this guide: [Seven Steps to Selecting a Research Topic](#).

- **Does my research project and internship need to overlap or be on the same topic?**

Ideally, a student's research project and internship are closely related. This allows students to leverage their internship to collect data or gain more insight about their research topic. It is not required that a student's research project align perfectly with their internship. As long as the internship is planning related, it can be used to complete the internship requirement.

- **What does the research project consist of?**

The "Senior Research Project" (SRP) is a capstone requirement in the path to earning your BA in Urban Studies and Planning. During USP 186 in the Fall you will lay the SRP's foundation in the form of a literature review, theory of change, and research proposal with preliminary data. During USP 187 in the Winter you'll use your proposal (i.e., research plan) to produce a 25-page scholarly thesis. But that is not all. In addition to the thesis, you will generate research communication products (about your SRP) that includes a TED-like story (oral presentation), poster, and an online GIS-based StoryMap. The six month SRP journey culminates in a widely attended annual Urban Expo (open to the public, mid-March).

- **What is Urban Expo?**

Urban Expo is a unique event that brings together students, faculty, staff, and the San Diego community to celebrate the research capstone projects of Urban Studies & Planning and Real Estate & Development graduating students. Students are given the opportunity to showcase their work to their peers, community, and industry professionals via a poster session. Effective Winter 2024 Urban Expo also showcases work from additional Urban Studies and Planning Department courses.

Internship related questions:

- **What type of internship is required for this class?**

An internship related to the field of Urban Studies and Planning. This typically is an internship or part-time job with a public agency (a San Diego city, county, or SANDAG), a non-profit, or a private planning firm. If you have questions about whether an internship would qualify, please send the internship info to Jennifer in the VAC and we will let you know. Typically what students seek out and want is okay however, there have been some that do not qualify, such as an administrative job or on-campus job not related to Urban Studies and Planning or potential related career fields. Ideally students should be aligning their internship with something that will allow them to explore a career field they are interested in and will allow them to build/learn additional skills and their network.

- **Do I have to find the internship by myself or is it assigned by the USP department?**

We do not place students in internships however we are here to support you in the process, such as by helping with your resume, cover letter, and application process, pointing you to places where you can find internships, and creating partnerships with organizations to create more internship opportunities. You will need to apply and secure your internship yourself. This will help prepare you for a job search after you graduate. We will be holding a workshop in Spring quarter for all students planning to take USP 186 in fall to go over important info.

- **Can I complete my internship prior to Fall quarter? Can I count a previous internship?**

While you can start your internship over summer (or spring), you cannot start counting hours towards the 100 hour requirement until Sept 1st of the fall quarter you take USP 186 and your internship should continue into Fall quarter. Hours can count as of 9/1.

- **What are the deadlines for finding an internship and completing my internship hours?**

Internships must be secured and learning agreements must be submitted by the end of week 3. Internship hours must be started by week 5.

Internship hours must be completed by the end of USP 187 in Winter quarter.

- **What is the recommended timeline and process for securing a Fall internship? (Note: Move these dates up if you are looking for summer internships that may continue into Fall.)**

Step 1: Brainstorm potential internship focus area(s) using the [USP website](#), USP [blog](#) page on internships openings, and from considering potential future career paths ([USP Career Opportunities](#), [ACSP Overview](#), [Planning Specializations](#), [Choosing the Planning Profession](#)) Recommended deadline early-July.

Step 2: Prepare your application materials including a resume and learn how to create a cover letter. Have your resume reviewed by USP's Director of Industry Relations and Student Professional Development, Jennifer Eller, or the Career Center Recommended deadline mid-July.

Step 3: Start applying for internship positions. Recommended deadline by the start of August.

Typical hiring process: Most internships and jobs can be posted (meaning ads put out and accepting applications) for anywhere from 1-3 weeks. From there it typically takes at least a week or two for applications to be reviewed, then a week for interviews, then a decision about a week later. That means the process can take anywhere from 3-8 weeks. Some organizations (private companies, smaller organizations) may be more nimble and faster. Government agencies (SANDAG, cities, counties) tend to take longer and may also require background and TB checks which can add to this timeline.

- **Where can I look for internships?**

The [USP Blog](#) lists current internship openings. We recommend checking the blog at least once a week. Additional resources: [Handshake](#), [Indeed](#), [LinkedIn Jobs](#), professional association pages (keywords: intern, internship, student). The [Internship page](#) of the USP website includes organizations that students have previously interned with or that faculty think may be a good potential partner. If there are organizations that stand out to you we can brainstorm ways to approach them. Not all internships and jobs are officially posted. Sharing your goals with your personal and professional network, including faculty and advisors, peers, friends, and family can help you to connect with hidden opportunities, and identify options you may not have considered.

- **Can this be a part-time job? Does it need to be a paid or unpaid internship?**

Internships may be either paid or unpaid. If you secure a part-time job that relates to urban studies and planning, it may be possible to qualify it as an internship, if it meets certain criteria. These include significant opportunities for learning, professional supervision/mentorship, and projects or responsibilities that allow you to apply knowledge and/or skills relevant to urban studies and planning. Jobs that are primarily clerical in nature or are unrelated to the major typically will not qualify.

- **I'm an international student, what should I know about finding an internship?**

International students should review ISPO's [Guidance on working before graduating, volunteering, and unpaid internships](#) before applying to any positions. Each visa type has different regulations. Additional questions related to visas and working, volunteering, and internships should be directed to the [International Students & Programs Office \(ISPO\)](#).

- **What resources are available to help me with my internship search?**

There are multiple resources available to help you with your internship include: USP's Director of Industry Relations and Student Professional Development, Jennifer Eller, who can provide you with a [resume template and tips](#), provide feedback on resumes and cover letters, brainstorm organizations and the internship search process. Jennifer is available for [30 minute Zoom advising sessions](#). Tricia Taylor with the [UCSD Academic Internship Program \(AIP\)](#) can also assist students with researching internships and the internship search process. [UCSD's Career Center](#) provides similar services. The Professor(s) teaching the course and other USP faculty are also useful resources when it comes to brainstorming organizations to look into.

- **I have secured an internship, now what?**

Once you have secured an internship here are the next steps you need to take: Complete the [USP Senior Sequence Internship Update Form](#) asap. Create a Learning Agreement in InternLink (<http://aipinternlink.ucsd.edu>). After you have set up your internship, you will be able to use the "Track Hours" tool in InternLink.

- **Can my leadership role in a student organization fulfill the internship requirement?**

It depends on the role and organization. Leadership positions within Young Planners Society, Triton Real Estate Organization, Urban Changemakers, Arch@UCSD, and USP Student Reps do not count towards the internship requirement. If you have questions about whether a position would qualify, please send Jennifer more details in the VAC and we will let you know.

AIP Process questions:

- **What is the learning agreement?**

The Learning Agreement is a document students submit to share key details about your internship, such as the organization, dates, Supervisor, and a description of your internship role or projects, as well as your learning objectives. It is approved by the University and by your internship Supervisor, and is used for grading purposes to confirm your engagement in an internship that fulfills the internship requirement for USP 186/187.

- **How do I create my Learning Agreement?**

Create a Learning Agreement in InternLink (<http://aipinternlink.ucsd.edu>)

1. Log into InternLink and click "MyLearning Agreements".
2. Click the "Add New Experience" button to create your Learning Agreement, and fill out the form. Be sure to select "*USP Senior Sequence*" as your Experiential Learning Type, and *USP 186/187* as the Course. List your USP 186 Professor as the faculty advisor. Click "Submit" when you are done.
3. Once approved by Academic Internship Program, a link to your Learning Agreement will be emailed to your internship supervisor for approval.
4. Submit a PDF of the approved Learning Agreement to your USP 186 Professor via your USP 186 Canvas shell in Fall quarter (this will be listed as a fall assignment in Canvas).

Note: You do NOT need to submit an EASy request to AIP, or enroll in AIP 197.

5. After your Learning Agreement has been approved, you will be able to use the "Track Hours" tool in InternLink.

- **How do I track my internship hours?**

Use the "Track Hours" tool in InternLink to input your weekly internship hours. The hours you input will be included in the Employer Evaluation we send to your internship supervisor at the

end of your internship for feedback and verification of your internship participation. The Track Hours tool will only be accessible after your Learning Agreement has been approved.

- **Who can I contact if I have questions related to the AIP Process?**

If you have any questions about the AIP process, please contact Tricia Taylor Oliveira (ttaylor@ucsd.edu) and she will have more information. You can also contact Tricia/AIP by sending a VAC message to Academic Internship Program.