

Graduate Internship Opportunity

SUMMER 2026

Project Title

Energy & Water Conservation Compliance Checklist Development

Organization

District of Sooke

About the Opportunity – Sustainability Scholars Program Info

These 250-hour internships are offered in partnership with community organizations and provide UVic graduate students from any discipline with opportunities to gain applied sustainability research experience. Scholars work under the guidance of a partner mentor and contribute to projects with real community impact.

The 2026 pay rate is approximately \$34.72/hour. To apply, visit the [Sustainability Scholars Program website](#) and review the application guide to confirm eligibility and required materials. Applications close at 11:59 pm PT on Sunday, February 1, 2026. Questions? Contact Laurel Currie: sustainability-scholars@uvic.ca.

Project Background

The District of Sooke is advancing climate action and resource conservation through its draft Official Community Plan (OCP), including Development Permit Area (DPA) 1 – Energy and Water Conservation and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction. DPA 1 outlines recommended practices intended to support energy efficiency, water conservation, low-carbon development, and climate-resilient design in multi-family, commercial, and mixed-use projects.

Because these guidelines are currently voluntary rather than prescriptive, applicants and staff can face challenges interpreting and applying them consistently. This project addresses that gap by developing a practical Compliance Checklist that translates DPA 1 guidelines into clear, user-friendly checkpoints. The checklist will support voluntary uptake of sustainability best practices while improving clarity, transparency, and consistency in the development review process.

The project aligns with the District's Climate Action Plan, Community Climate Resilience Framework, and provincial policy direction, and supports Sooke's efforts to balance growth with environmental stewardship, watershed health, and community values.

Project Description

The Scholar will develop a Compliance Checklist that interprets the draft DPA 1 guidelines into a practical tool for development applicants and District staff. The checklist will highlight optional strategies related to energy efficiency, water conservation, greenhouse gas reduction, stormwater management, and sustainable materials, while recognizing the voluntary nature of DPA 1 at this stage.

Project objectives include:

- Translating DPA 1 guidelines into clear, actionable checkpoints
- Improving usability and transparency for applicants navigating sustainability considerations
- Supporting consistent staff review through a shared reference tool
- Incorporating culturally and ecologically grounded practices, including native and climate-resilient landscaping

The intended outcome is a user-friendly checklist that supports higher-performing, environmentally responsible development as the OCP progresses toward adoption.

Project Scope

The Scholar's work will involve five core activity areas:

- 1. Policy and Literature Review**
 - Analyze the *draft* DPA 1 guidelines and related sustainability policies (e.g., Climate Action Plan, Resilience Framework, Step Code).
 - Review best practices from comparable municipalities regarding voluntary sustainability checklists and development permit guidance tools.
- 2. Extraction and Organization of Guideline Content**
 - Identify the key energy, water, and GHG-related considerations outlined in DPA 1.
 - Distinguish between recommended practices, optional design pathways, and informational guidance.
- 3. Checklist Design and Framework Development**
 - Develop a practical structure for the checklist, including criteria, indicators, and optional compliance pathways.
 - Incorporate cultural and ecological considerations such as native plant use, water-wise design, and landscaping that aligns with local values.
- 4. Staff and Stakeholder Engagement**
 - Conduct interviews or workshops with Planning, Building, and Environmental staff to validate clarity, usability, and relevance.
 - Integrate feedback to refine the checklist layout and content.
- 5. Finalization and Documentation**
 - Produce the complete DPA 1 Compliance Checklist.
 - Draft supporting instructions, definitions, and guidance notes for applicants and reviewers.

Deliverables

A final deliverable will be completed by August 1, consisting of a comprehensive report that summarizes the project's objectives, research findings, analysis, and recommendations. This report will document the development of the DPA 1 Compliance Checklist, outline the rationale behind its structure, and describe how the checklist supports voluntary sustainability practices within the draft OCP framework. It will also include reflections on best practices, stakeholder insights, and opportunities for future refinement following potential OCP adoption.

Time Commitment + Timeline

This 250-hour internship will take place between **May 1 and August 15, 2026**, with work paced across the summer to support research, consultation, and deliverable development.

May – Project Initiation & Research

- Orientation, background reading, and review of the *draft* OCP and DPA 1 guidelines
- Comparative research, identification of opportunities

June – Drafting & Framework Development

- Extraction of guideline content, drafting checkpoint categories, consultations
- Development of cultural, ecological, and native-plant-informed considerations

July – Refinement & Testing

- Incorporation of feedback and testing, revisions, and preparation of draft report

Early August – Final Write-Up & Submission

- Completion of the final report, checklist, supporting materials
- Submission of the deliverable by August 1

Exact timing may shift slightly depending on consultation schedules and project needs.

Required / Preferred Skills and Experience

Required

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability
- Strong analytical skills
- Ability to work independently
- Deadline oriented
- Project management and organizational skills
- Design and layout skills

Preferred

- Experience with financial modelling and analysis
- Experience conducting stakeholder engagement events, including facilitation skills, is an asset
- Familiarity with research methodologies and survey techniques

- Excellent public speaking and presentation skills
- Community engagement experience
- Familiarity conducting focus group research

Additional skills:

- Demonstrated experience in environmental policy, planning, or sustainability assessment
- Ability to translate technical language to plain and practical

Additional Information

The ideal candidate will have an academic background in environmental studies, geography, urban planning, public policy, sustainability, or a related interdisciplinary field, with a strong interest in climate action, sustainable development, and community planning. This role is well suited to a student who enjoys applied policy work and translating complex guidance into clear, practical tools.

The Scholar should be detail-oriented, analytical, and comfortable working independently with mentorship support. Strong communication skills and a collaborative approach are important, as the project involves engaging with District staff and incorporating feedback to improve the clarity and usability of the checklist.

The Scholar will work with a small, supportive project team within the District of Sooke, with regular check-ins and access to expertise from Planning, Building, and Communications staff. Mentorship will be hands-on and iterative, while the Scholar leads research, checklist development, and recommendations.

Additional Project Requirements

If additional materials or resources become necessary to support research or engagement activities, the District will supply or fund them as appropriate. While most work can be conducted remotely, a community visit (or two) to Sooke to ground the research and gather local reference material- such as site observations or photography - would be beneficial.

If the Scholar requires the use of a District vehicle while conducting research in the community, a valid driver's licence must be provided.