

How to Set up an Internship at Your Organization

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What is an Internship? Advantages of Hiring an Intern.

An internship is a supervised on-the-job learning experience related to a student's career interest. Interns have a designated set of responsibilities or a job description and are actively supported and evaluated by a supervisor or mentor. A solid internship provides the opportunity to learn about the field while allowing the intern to make a contribution to the organization's work.

The important elements that distinguish an internship from a short-term job or community service opportunity are a) the intentional **learning** agenda that the intern, in agreement with the employer, brings to the experience and b) the work is **career-related** for the student and c) the intern receives **evaluation** of their work from the supervisor.

It is well documented that students benefit greatly from an internship experience. Interns get the opportunity to apply knowledge learned in the classroom to the workplace. The student's career development is enhanced as they gain a knowledge of the qualifications and duties of a position and can explore their interest in a field. They gain crucial professional skills in decision making, critical thinking, as well as gaining increased confidence and self-esteem.

There is no doubt that employers also benefit from the internship experience. Interns can provide immediate short-term help to support projects that have been put on the back burner due to lack of staff time or to fill in for employees on temporary leave or vacation. They can also energize a workplace with their enthusiasm and desire to learn, as well as provide a very effective recruitment tool for new hires. Many of those who employ interns also report genuine satisfaction in helping to train new professionals to their field and giving them a start as someone once did for them.

Internship Description

One of the initial steps in establishing an internship is developing a clear description of the student's duties and responsibilities and a well-defined set of expectations in relation to these assignments. Internship positions include pre-professional activities similar to those of a new entrant in the field and allow the intern to put classroom knowledge into practice through hands-on experience. Educate the intern about your organization's structure, practices, and goals.

Qualifications

A well-defined outline of qualifications helps students evaluate their suitability for the position and is essential in order to establish a pool of appropriate candidates for an employer. Qualifications may include previous related experience, computer skills, technical skills, presentation skills, and other criteria pertinent to the position. Be sure to include any basic professional skills that may be required in your work such as punctuality, writing ability, phone skills, and ability to work without supervision after initial training.

Hours Per Week

Internships involve enough work hours to allow students to gain valuable career-related experience and employers to obtain a measurable benefit from the student's work contributions. The average work schedule for internships during the academic year ranges from 8 to 20 hours per week; summer internships often range from 10 to 40 hours per week. The hours per week can vary. For example, an intern may work 10 hours per week while classes are in session and work 30 hours per week during winter and spring breaks. It is important for students and employers to discuss the work schedule together and develop a plan that will meet both their needs.

Duration

When arranging an internship, it is important to set a specific duration of time. This limits the initial time commitment made by the employer and student and encourages discussion between them at the conclusion of the internship. If the employer and student wish to extend the internship, they can renegotiate this when the first work period is completed. Some common time frames for internships are summer, semester, and academic year.

HSU Spring Semester runs from the 3rd week of January to the middle of May. Fall Semester begins the 3rd week of August and ends in the middle of December.

Supervision

Close communication between the supervisor and the intern is essential for a successful internship. It is best to have one overall supervisor who arranges training opportunities, schedules regular meetings to discuss questions and concerns, and monitors the intern's progress.

The supervisor will also handle the student's verbal and written job performance evaluation at the end of the internship. The evaluation process facilitates an open exchange between the supervisor and intern and can be essential for personal development and for internship program improvements.

Evaluation

A job performance evaluation is a critical part of the internship or career-related experience. An evaluation helps the intern to acknowledge work strengths and areas for improvement. The supervisor can recommend specific coursework or technical experience for the student to pursue. This is a great opportunity for the intern to obtain letters of recommendation and establish a list of references for future jobs.

Majors

If you know the work involved in your internship requires the classes or knowledge gained in a particular academic major, please indicate. Otherwise, leave this requirement open to "any major" and seek students who have the ability and skills needed to do the job.

Compensation

Interns may be compensated with an hourly pay rate or a stipend to cover meals, living expenses, travel, etc. The California state minimum wage is \$7.00; interns being paid on an hourly basis cannot be paid below this wage.

A stipend is a one-time payment that does not correspond to an hourly rate. For example, a student may agree to perform 25 hours of work per week for ten weeks in the summer and receive a stipend of \$1,500 to cover living expenses, meals, travel, etc.

Insurance and Payroll Administration

The employer will pay the student's hourly wages or stipend, provide worker's compensation insurance (even if the position is a volunteer internship), comply with all laws regarding withholding and payment of payroll taxes, and complete I-9 forms. Employers are required to cover income, social security and Medicare taxes on stipends. Refer to Internal Revenue Service forms 15 and 15-A or visit www.irs.gov for more information.

Typically stipends are paid at the end of the term of employment.

Academic Credit

If arrangements are made with faculty, the student may be able to receive academic credit for a major-related internship. Credit must be organized and approved through an academic department before the internship begins. HSU academic departments differ on their willingness to offer credit for internships. Students need to inquire about this possibility at their department before accepting the internship if they desire to receive credit.

Students may be required to write research papers, keep a job journal, conduct informational interviews, and complete evaluations. If academic credit has been arranged with a Humboldt State University faculty member, appropriate agreement forms will need to be completed. The student, employer and the HSU faculty member will agree on the terms of the internship.

Training

Training educates interns about your organization's structure, practices, and goals. Learning opportunities may include:

1. A company tour and formal or informal workplace orientation
2. Review of employee handbook or position duties and goals of position
3. Attend meetings with staff members from different departments
4. Job shadowing (following a staff member for a period of time to observe job duties)
5. Attend regular staff meetings
6. Attend and participate in in-house or off site workshops and seminars
7. On-the-job training by supervisor and by other staff members in diverse positions
8. Work assignments that require critical thinking and decision-making skills.

Here are some examples of internships posted through the HSU Career Center by Humboldt County employers:

Public Relations/ Marketing Intern

Job Description

Market organic hair/beauty products produced by Arcata business that distributes internationally. Opportunity to write press releases, handle media outreach with TV, magazines, etc. Possible event planning.

Qualifications

Ability to write well and promote the company's hair products and body lotions, and their fundraising efforts through Jessicurl's human rights program called "Woman Around the World". Good communication and organizational skills needed.

Production Department Intern

Job Description

KEET-TV, the PBS member station serving California's North Coast, is seeking an intern to work in the Production Department. The intern will have the opportunity to edit digital audio, and prepare character generation for on-air nightly line-up segments. Other opportunities may include, but are not limited to: working as a member of KEET's technical crew during studio productions, editing digital video, logging field tapes, assisting staff producers with lighting and set construction, assisting on location shoots, and supporting the production department as needed.

Qualifications

Related coursework or experience is preferred but not necessary; KEET-TV will provide all training. The intern will be expected to provide 100 hours of service over the course of the semester. Hours are flexible and will be within normal business hours, however preference will be given to candidates available on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Evening and weekend hours are optional. The intern must have a reliable means of transportation.

Animal Services Counselor

Job Description

Assist the public in person and by phone including pet adoption and spay/neuter financial assistance services. Record legible accurate record of transactions. Learn laws and regulations relating to domestic animals, shelter procedures and pet care and communicate this information to public. Assist in

Qualifications

Demonstrated love for and experience in the care and handling of animals. Excellent interpersonal communication and telephone skills. Basic knowledge of common office procedures and equipment. 40 wpm using MS Word.