

Internship Guide

Career & Internship Services

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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Internships Defined

An internship is a position which allows a student to gain professional experience in an occupational area they are considering. Typically the experience has a level of responsibility that allows a student to develop new skills in the field and offers the student training and supervision that facilitates learning. Internships can either be for credit or completed without documentation by the University.

Benefits of Having Internships

Internships are a critical part of your educational experience and provide countless benefits. Some critical reasons to have one or more internships:

- Gain excellent on-the-job experience to help you build your skills and resume
- Develop great networking opportunities with employers
- Learn about an organization to determine if you would like to work there after graduation
- Narrow your career interests and focus your job target
- Gain leads for full-time jobs. Employers consistently rank their organization's internship program as one of the most effective tools for recruiting college graduates for full-time positions.

Some thoughts from alumni on the benefit of internships:

“An internship will open your eyes to the career and you will know in a very short time whether that career is right for you.”

“Internships or any job experience related to your major is extremely valuable. Start doing internships and job searching early.”

“Outstanding work in your internships leads to great references and experiences and ultimately you will be very appealing to employers.”

Frequently Asked Questions

When is the best time to do an internship?

This varies by major and by the type of internship you plan to secure. Some technical internships (and those for credit) may require greater academic knowledge better suited to a Junior or Senior. Other fields can accommodate students in the Freshman or Sophomore year. Start early! Those students with 2-3 internship experiences are often the most productive in securing full-time employment quickly upon graduation. If you do not feel ready for an internship, consider a part-time job in your field instead.

Are internships required to graduate?

In some majors, internships are taken for credit and are a requirement for the program. In this case, an internship must meet specific guidelines and requires faculty approval. However, many students participate in additional internships for professional development and to gain a variety of experiences before graduation. If you are in a major where an internship is required, your academic advisor and college student service office can help you learn the requirements for the internship and the steps required to gain credit for the experience.

How many hours per week are required for a typical internship?

Internships occurring during the academic year typically require a commitment of 10-20 hours per week. During the summer it is more common for an internship to be full-time. We encourage a minimum of 10 hours per week to allow for a comprehensive learning experience. To receive credit for an internship, there a minimum number of hours you must accumulate. Check with your adviser for specific information for your major.

Are internships paid?

Some internships are paid, while others are not. Internships with larger for-profit organizations are often paid and in some cases students are paid quite well. Students having internships with small businesses or small non-profits may find compensation much more difficult to secure. In some cases you may receive a one time or monthly stipend for your work. Grants and scholarships are sometimes available for those with unpaid internships. Check with your college for more information on scholarship opportunities.

Basic Steps to Securing an Internship

Step 1: Clarify Your Goals

Having some focus before you start your search will actually make your internship search easier and lead to a better experience. Before you begin looking, ask yourself the following questions:

- What type of internship are you looking to acquire?
- What skills would you most like to develop during the experience?
- What type of work environment would fit your interests and values? (For profit? Non-profit? Government? Large? Small?)
- What qualities do you look for in an ideal supervisor?

Use this information to thoughtfully and critically assess various internship opportunities. Need help clarifying your goals? Talk to your faculty advisor or get help from a career advisor at Career and Internship Services by calling 612-624-2710.

Step 2: Develop Application Materials and Polish Interview Skills

Before you begin looking for internship openings, it is important to prepare the appropriate documents that employers may require in the application process. Be sure to do the following:

- Draft a resume and cover letter; sample handouts are available at Career and Internship Services.
 - Have your materials critiqued by Career Services staff to ensure you have marketed your skills as effectively as possible.
 - Check out our web site to get tips on how to prepare for interviews.
 - Schedule a practice interview to further develop your skills by calling 612-624-2710.
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Step 3: Identify Internship Openings

Finding and securing an internship takes discipline and dedication on the part of the job seeker. A few basic steps you should take when searching for an internship:

Postings/Events

- Check out GoldPASS, the job and internship listing system for University of Minnesota students and alumni at www.goldpass.umn.edu and
- Attend upcoming job and internship fairs. For the most current schedule visit <http://www.careerhelp.umn.edu/>

Unadvertised Openings

- Not all internships are advertised. Make a list of organizations you want to work for and contact them directly to inquire about internship programs. Visit the Career and Internship Services to learn how to find local companies in your field.
- Tell your family, friends and acquaintances that you are looking for an internship and what type. This will often lead to information about openings.
- Talk to faculty and instructors about your internship goals. They often have information on upcoming openings within organizations.
- Approximately 75% of job openings are never advertised. Meet with a career advisor to learn how conducting informational interviews can lead to internship opportunities.
- Propose an internship with an organization that does not currently have an intern program.
- Not finding the right internship experience? Schedule an appointment with a career advisor at Career and Internship Services by calling 612-624-2710.
- Detailed information on job searching, cold calling and informational interviews is available at Career and Internship Services and on the career services web site.

Internships Abroad

Studying abroad is a great opportunity to develop cultural understanding and language skills that will help you in your future career. Many study abroad locations also have internship opportunities available for students. This can be a great opportunity to experience a culture in a new way and can also allow for tremendous professional development in your field.

To learn more about internship opportunities abroad, contact the Learning Abroad Center:

<http://www.umabroad.umn.edu> or call 612-626-9000.

Step 4: Accept or Reject Internship Offers

Being offered an internship is very exciting and it may be tempting to say “yes” to an employer immediately. Before accepting any offer, be sure to follow the below tips and suggestions:

- Know who will supervise you; be sure you have met them and feel as if you can work well together.
- Confirm your daily tasks while on the internship; be certain the skills and experiences you hope to gain can be developed in this experience.
- Clarify hours, schedules, pay and make sure they will work around your class schedule.
- If you are waiting to hear from another organization, ask for extra time to think about the first offer. Call the second organization, explain the situation, and ask if their decision will be made soon.
- Ask for any offer in writing so the terms that have been agreed upon by all parties are documented. If they do not send you a written offer, send them a letter reviewing your understanding of the position, supervisor, schedule, dates of employment and pay arrangements.
- If you reject an offer, be sure to be cordial and thank the employer for their time and consideration.
- If you are not offered a position that you interviewed for, contact the organization to thank them for the opportunity to interview and ask for feedback on your resume, experiences, qualifications and interview technique.

Credit and Funding

Credit

Some majors require that you obtain credit for an internship as part of your degree requirements, and for others it is optional. We highly suggest students to have multiple internships for better self-exploration and career preparation. Always check with your academic adviser to confirm the guidelines for your individual major. The process for gaining credit for internships varies for each college. To learn how to gain credit for your internship experience check with your college student services office. Visit the appropriate web site listed below for contact information and details:

College of Continuing Education

Contact your academic advisor for information at 612-624-4000.

College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences

<https://www.cfans.umn.edu/academics/undergrad-resources/internships>

College of Design, St. Paul Campus Majors

www.design.umn.edu/current_students/info/internship.html

Funding

Some unpaid internships provide professional experiences that are priceless. We encourage students to consider every internship even if it is unpaid. The short-term financial sacrifice can pay off heavily in the long run by getting outstanding experience and excellent networking contacts.

Scholarships are a good way to off-set the lost wages you may encounter when taking an unpaid internship. We encourage you to apply for those scholarships for which you are eligible to help you balance financial obligations while pursuing internships. Some of the scholarships and grants offered are specifically for those engaged in quality internship experiences. To learn about scholarship opportunities for your college and major contact your academic adviser.

Prepare For Your Internship

Develop Thoughtful Learning Objectives

The most common problem in an internship stems from conflicting expectations among the student, the site supervisor, and/or the faculty advisor. Defining learning objectives and goals will provide you with a sense of direction and can be a great tool for dialog with your supervisor.

Think about creating learning objectives related to:

1. Academic Concepts - Consider writing objectives that relate to classroom learning or reading.
2. Skill Development - Identify skills you would like to learn or improve during your internship. Talk with faculty and your internship supervisor for ideas. Review your resume for missing skills sets.
3. Personal Development - Create goals that develop you personally including your character, preferences, communication skills, self confidence and other personal skills.

Have Realistic Expectations

It is important that students have realistic expectations about their internship experience. One frequent misconception that students have when entering their internships is that they will be given a lot of responsibility immediately. Typically you will have to earn the supervisor's trust before being given higher level tasks. It is also wrong to assume that you will receive a permanent job offer as a result of your internship. While this does happen, it is important not to make that assumption.

Succeeding in Your Internship

Having a successful internship doesn't happen automatically. There are several basic things that you can do to make your internship a successful learning experience and to increase your likelihood of turning the experience into a job offer after graduation.

Nuts & Bolts

- Always arrive on time and don't request too much time off unless there is genuine need.
- Dress professionally and ask your supervisor for specific guidelines to follow.
- Don't become involved in workplace gossip.
- Stay on task with projects; if you finish a task, ask for another.
- Alert your supervisor if you encounter a problem or have made a mistake.

Communication

- Have an initial meeting with your supervisor to discuss your interactions, how often will you meet, how they feel about interruptions and who you should contact if your supervisor is unavailable.
- When you need assistance, ask. Supervisors expect interns to have questions.
- Set a list of goals for the internship and confirm with your supervisor they are reasonable.
- Request regular meetings with your supervisor to discuss your progress on your goals and to request feedback on your performance.
- When finishing your internship ask for a final meeting with your supervisor to get feedback and to discuss using them as a reference in the future.
- Develop your interpersonal skills: recognize when to speak and when to listen.

Learning

- Ask to conduct informational interviews with other employees to learn about other positions and departments.
 - Remember to ask not just “how” questions. Also ask: “Why?” or “How does this piece connect with the entire project?” “What will happen with this when I am finished?” “What is the next phase?”
 - Observe personal styles of supervisors and colleagues: identify leadership styles that promote good working relationships or hinder productivity.
 - Learn about the site’s mission statement or philosophy: is it “lived” or is it forgotten?
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Concluding Your Internship

There are several things you can do to be sure that your internship ends on a positive note:

- Thank people you worked with for the opportunity to intern with their company.
 - Sit down with your supervisor for an “exit interview.” Discuss how you met your original learning objectives. Talk about the projects that were most valuable to you and what skills you gained. Ask your supervisor for any advice s/he may have regarding future job searches or job performance.
 - Request a letter of recommendation if you have established a positive relationship with your supervisor.
 - Ask permission to copy appropriate items to include in a portfolio.
 - Create a list of all the projects you worked on and the skills you developed. Make a list of additional skills you would like to develop in the future.
 - Revise your resume to incorporate your internship and the skills you have developed.
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Internship Resources

For more information on obtaining credit for your internship, contact your academic adviser.

To get assistance with securing an internship position contact Career and Internship Services at 612-624-2710 or visit us in 198 McNeal Hall/411 Bruininks Hall.

Web Sites:

GoldPASS: Job Postings for University of Minnesota Students and Alumni.

www.goldpass.umn.edu

College Grad.com Internship Postings

<http://collegegrad.com/internships/>

Internship Books/Materials

- Fashion Intern, Get Real Internships, Internship Bible, Internship Success
 - Internship examples are available for every major in our “Major Binders”
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