

General Internship Guide

Lawrence University
Career Center

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What is an internship?

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As defined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), “an internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent.”

How Do Internships Benefit Employers?

- Year-round source of highly motivated pre-professionals
- Students bring new perspectives to old problems
- The visibility of your organization is increased on campus
- Quality candidates for temporary or seasonal positions and projects
- Freedom for professional staff to pursue more creative projects
- Flexible, cost-effective work force not requiring a long-term employer commitment
- Proven, cost-effective way to recruit and evaluate potential employees
- Your image in the community is enhanced as you contribute your expertise to the educational enterprise

Managing the Intern(s)

Adapted from Michael True's "Starting and Maintaining a Quality Internship Program" – 8th Edition

Once you have hired a worker, you put them to work, right? That's true for interns as well as regular employees, but with an intern, you will be making an important first impression. The beginning days of the internship program are often its defining days. When you give them their first tasks, you are signaling what can be expected in the future. If you give them nothing or little to do, it sends a message that this job will be easy — and boring. Interns do not want that; of course, neither do employers. The organization of your internship will probably be the single most important influence on an intern's impression of your organization, and thus the chances that he or she will come back. So how do you "plan for success"? Consider the goals of your program. The nature of the program and the activities that you choose to undertake should relate to your program goals.

First, orient your intern to their new workplace.

This might take the form of a conventional orientation program or merely a walk around the workplace, depending on the size of your organization. After all, even though they may not be permanent employees, they'll be spending a great deal of time in your workplace. Give interns an overview of your organization; some organizations give talks or hand out information about the organization's history, vision and services. Explain who does what and what the intern's duties will be. Introduce them to coworkers and give them a complete tour of the facility.

Give your intern the resources they need to do the job. That may sound obvious, but you'd be surprised at how many companies stick their interns out in an out-of-the-way room or transfer them from desk to desk. That sends a potent message you don't want to send: Interns aren't important; we don't want you here. Give the intern a designated workspace and show them where to get needed supplies. If part of the work will be virtual, make sure they have what they need to work remotely.

Keep an eye on the intern. This doesn't mean watching their every move, but do make sure you know what's happening with their daily tasks. Watch for signs that the intern is confused or bored. As often as silence means that an intern is busy, it also could mean that they are confused and shy about telling you so. It's easy to be shy in a workplace full of strangers who all know each other. See whether the intern is trying to do anything that requires someone else's input. Check in regularly to discuss work progress and answer any questions if the intern is working remotely. Make sure that work is taking precedence over web browsing or texting friends. Paying attention early helps you head off problems and bad habits.

Give them lots of feedback!

Especially if your interns have never done this kind of work before, they'll want to know if their work is measuring up to your expectations. No matter what the level of experience, they need

you, as a more experienced worker, to let them know if their work is officially “okay”. Periodically, examine what your intern has produced and make suggestions.

Informal Feedback

Informal feedback is sometimes not perceived by the student as feedback. Informal feedback shows up as comments or a light-hearted nudge. When using informal feedback, be clear with your intent. The more direct, the more likely the student will perceive this to be an area of focus. Positive feedback should be given freely. Areas of growth should be presented in a private setting where the student is not embarrassed. Feedback should be delivered as often as possible to encourage the student to continue to develop.

Formal Feedback

Formal feedback should be prepared and delivered in a private meeting with the intern to discuss student’s strengths and areas for growth. It should be designed so the manager achieves their desired goal. Students should have clear goals of what areas of growth needs to be addressed. Use specific examples of student behavior whenever possible so, students have clear ideas of what areas need improvement.

- **Please note:** Lawrence University facilitates an end of internship evaluation through an online form that we encourage you to discuss with the student in such a meeting. However, we encourage more formal feedback throughout the experience as well.

Orientation Checklist for Internships

Explain the Mission of the Organization

How did the organization start? Why?
What is unique about your product or service?
Who benefits from your product or service?
What are the organization's current goals?
How may the intern contribute to those goals?

Explain the Organization Structure

Who reports to whom?
Who, specifically, is the intern's supervisor?
What is the intern's department responsible for?
How are decisions made?
Which personnel can answer various kinds of questions?

Outline Organizational Rules, Policies, Decorum and Expectations

Is there special industry jargon?
What access to the supervisor (days, times, and duration) does the intern have?
How should they process requests?
How do the mail and telephone systems work?
What are the approved forms for correspondence?
By what safety regulations must they abide?
Is there a procedure for signing off completed work?
What periodic forms or reports need to be completed?
What local, state, and/or federal guidelines or laws apply to their work?
Are there security or confidentiality issues the intern should be aware of?
What is acceptable for dress and appearance?
How should they maintain the premises and their work area?

Define the Intern's Responsibilities

What is the intern's role?
What projects will be assigned to them?
What resources are available to the intern?
What training is necessary?
How does the organization want the intern to deal with clients?
What tasks can be completed without supervisory approval?
Do other employees understand the intern's role?

Monitor the Intern's Adjustment and Understanding of What is Expected

Make yourself visibly available to the intern
Assign someone who can periodically "check-in" with the intern
Supply feedback and constructive criticism
Make time for the intern to ask questions

Ten Concerns of Interns

Adapted from Michael True's "Starting and Maintaining a Quality Internship Program" – 8th Edition

Give us real work! It can't be said too many times that interns want to work and learn. An internship can help you get a job done that you couldn't otherwise, right? If you've brought on an intern as a recruitment tool, then how will you be able to assess their abilities?

Do what you say and say what you do! Be honest with your interns about what they can expect. If the job requires stuffing some envelopes, then make that clear. But if you tell the intern they will be researching a project, and they spend 90% of their time doing "grunt work," then bad feelings will develop.

We like feedback! Remember that interns are students, and they may not have the business skills and experiences that you take for granted. If your intern makes an oversight, just pull him or her aside and explain how the situation should be handled in the future.

We want to be included too! Is there a staff meeting they can attend? Can they quietly tag along to that next project meeting or office luncheon? Include them in the daily life of your workplace. After all, if you help them gain a broader perspective, it will help everyone involved.

Please explain. When you assign work, make sure you give a detailed explanation. While the work may seem trivial and obvious to you, it may not be obvious to someone who's never done it before. Patience and a few extra minutes at the beginning will pay off later when your intern can produce excellent work independently.

I want a mentor! Make sure that interns have a mentor or supervisor to supply guidance. Make it someone who genuinely likes to teach, and the experience will be even better.

A minute of your time, please. The best mentor in the world is useless if he or she can't, or won't, spend the necessary time mentoring. As newcomers, interns may not speak up if they're feeling ignored, so the burden of making sure they're okay is on the mentor.

Be prepared! That wonderful day has arrived, and the intern goes to start their internship only to learn that no one knew they were coming, and there is no place for them to work. Brief your staff of the student's impending arrival, and help the intern get started on a positive note.

Um...I need a chair. It is amazing how many employers hire an intern and don't think about the fact that they will need a desk, chair, phone and a computer to do the task assigned. It isn't fun or efficient to move an intern from desk to desk.

Show me the money (as best you can). While internships differ, and each industry has its own personality, remember that interns have expenses. The Diversity in Conservation Internship Program's commitment to paying interns will go a long way.

Supervising the Intern

Adapted from Michael True's "Starting and Maintaining a Quality Internship Program" – 8th Edition

Students will look to you as a mentor who will aid their transition from the classroom to the work environment. Since the internship is an extension of the learning process, you will need to supply opportunities to bridge the two experiences. We suggest that you meet with your interns regularly to supply feedback concerning their performance. During these meetings, the students can:

- report on the status of a project
- ask questions
- learn how their work is contributing to the organization
- participate in an evaluation of their strengths
- discuss areas needing growth and development
- get a sense of what kind of work lies ahead

Encourage your interns to keep a portfolio of work carried out during the experience. This will help fulfill the students' academic requirements and provide them with a sense of accomplishment. In addition, it will give you a basis to discuss their professional growth. It is also a great tool for them to use when developing the next resume! Specific work documents to include in a portfolio might be any of the following:

- Formal reports
- Communications and/or outreach content
- Presentations
- Story Maps
- Land Management Plans
- Monitoring Workbooks
- Monitoring Reports

KEY POINTS

- Maintain an open channel of communication with formal and informal meetings.
- Keep the interns busy and directed towards their learning goals. Students rarely complain of overwork, but they do complain if they are not challenged.
- Supply opportunities for increasing responsibility.
- Encourage professionalism by helping the interns in developing human relations skills, decision-making abilities, and managing workplace politics.
- Remember that you are a role model.
- Develop connections and work to help the intern do so!

Developing Work and Learning Activities

A large part of producing effective position descriptions involves the development of challenging work assignments that complement students' academic programs. One way to do this is to design a preliminary list of work activities that will meet the needs of your department. Later, when the interns you select join your team, you will have a chance to review the work activities and modify them according to the interns' knowledge and learning goals.

As part of the educational process, internship work activities should focus on projects specifically related to the academic major and the degree the interns expect to receive. Students who perform menial tasks will become quickly demoralized and will learn little about applying their expertise. Undergraduate students expect and appreciate clear direction regarding what is expected of them and frequent feedback concerning what and how they have done. It is also most important the interns perceive their work as making a useful contribution to the sponsoring organization. A particular concern at the undergraduate level is that work assignments provide interns with a variety of tasks, while accommodating the needs of the organization. Of course, some of the responsibilities will involve repetition because all work involves some repeated activity.

Sample tasks that undergraduate students have done include the following:

- Performing laboratory tests
- Designing posters, charts, graphs
- Conducting surveys and research
- Developing presentations
- Generating marketing and communications plans
- Take meeting notes and facilitate a debriefing
- Create a handbook for the next intern
- Develop training materials
- Implement a lesson plan
- Shadow a professional and complete task under their supervision
- Prepare a report on a specific topic
- Create a glossary or terminology reference sheet
- Work directly with the customer, clients or a group of kids
- Write a newsletter about the happenings with the organization or on a specific project/topic

KEY POINTS

- Describe challenging, but realistic tasks students can carry out within the time period
- Identify outcomes or expected products
- Be willing to incorporate the students' particular strengths
- Show how this work relates to the overall efforts of the department or organization

Appendix A – Internship Learning Goals

Learning Goals

(Student to complete with input from their supervisor during first week of internship)

Academic Learning Goals (How will this internship relate to your academic field of study and extend learning beyond the classroom?)

Goal #1:

Goal #2:

Soft Skills Development Goals (How do you plan to use this internship to develop your soft skills, such as communication skills, teamwork skills, time management skills, organizational skills, etc.)

Goal #1:

Task/duty/project to improve this skill:

Goal #2:

Task/duty/project to improve this skill:

Industry-related Skills and Expertise Goals (How do you plan to use this internship experience to develop your technical skills and knowledge?)

Goal #1:

Task/duty/project to improve this skill:

Goal #2:

Task/duty/project to improve this skill/goal:

Professional Development Goals (How do you plan to use the internship experience to enhance your career development, such as creating a professional network, learning how to respond to feedback, etc.)

Goal #1:

Plans for meeting this goal:

Student Signature:

Date:

Internship Supervisor Signature:

Date:

Appendix B – Performance Evaluation

IMPORTANT NOTE: This is a paper copy.

All evaluations are completed online and emailed directly to you.

SUPERVISOR FINAL EVALUATION

Lawrence University Diversity in Conservation Internship Program

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

The performance evaluation is one part of an ongoing supervisory process designed to clarify the intern's roles and responsibilities, enhance communication, foster role effectiveness and encourage personal and career development. The following sections reflect the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) competencies of career readiness. Under each competency, descriptive phrases are supplied to illustrate learning activities which reflect the knowledge, skills, and abilities a student should display through the internship.

To complete the evaluation please review the competencies, supply a rating for how well a student has performed in that area (see below scale) and then in the box supply details as a list or paragraph of examples when the student displayed the competency (either positively or negatively).

PERFORMANCE SCALE

Exceptional Performance (5): This individual is always a leader and an exceptional example to staff and students in this area. This individual is consistently seen as a top performer and has proven their ability to go beyond the call of duty for both their teammates.

Exceeds Expectations (4): This individual is often a leader in staff in this area. This individual is able and willing to offer teammates help in this area. This person often exceeds the expectations of their position. They show a positive attitude toward their position, staff, and department. Their effort and outcomes are often above what is expected in this area.

Meets Expectations (3): This individual meets all the requirements and expectations in this area. From time to time, this staff member may perform slightly above or below expectations for the position, but in general are meeting the expectations set forth.

Needs Improvement (2): This individual has not met the minimum expectations in this area. Applications of skills have not been consistently clear. In conjunction with increased focus and/or more effort in this area, this individual will be able to meet expectations.

Unsatisfactory (1): This individual consistently does not complete or meet expectations in this area. The individual often needs to be supplied constructive feedback and/or reminded of expectations. Immediate improvement is needed to keep staff.

NACE CAREER READINESS COMPETENCIES

Career and Self-Development: Proactively develop oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and without one's organization.

Communication: Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with people inside and outside of an organization.

Critical Thinking: Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.

Equity and Inclusion: Show the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills needed to equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures. Engage in anti-racist practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism.

Leadership: Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.

Professionalism: Knowing work environments differ greatly, understanding and proving effective work habits, and acting in the interest of the larger community and workplace.

Teamwork: Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.

Technology: Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and carry out goals.

CAREER AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION

Intern proactively develops oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and without one's organization. Sample behaviors:

- Demonstrates ability to set priorities/goals.
- Identifies methods and learning activities which can fill skill gaps during the internship.
- Seeks feedback and receives constructive feedback well.
- Accepts responsibility for mistakes and learns from experiences.

RATING SCALE: CHOOSE AN ITEM.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

COMMUNICATION EVALUATION

Intern clearly and effectively exchanges information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with people inside and outside of an organization. Sample behaviors:

- Reads/understands/follows written instructions.
- Communicates ideas and concepts clearly in writing.
- Demonstrates effective verbal communication skills.
- Proofreads online and written communication to avoid errors.

RATING SCALE: CHOOSE AN ITEM.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

CRITICAL THINKING EVALUATION

Intern identifies and responds to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information. Sample behaviors:

- Breaks down complex tasks/problems into manageable pieces.
- Brainstorms/develops options and ideas.
- Demonstrates an analytical ability.
- Asks pertinent and purposeful questions.
- Seeks out and uses resources.

RATING SCALE: CHOOSE AN ITEM.

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EQUITY AND INCLUSION EVALUATION

Intern shows the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills needed to equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures. Engages in anti-racist practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism. Sample behaviors:

- Respects the diversity (religious/cultural/ethnic) of co-workers.
- Reflects upon the impact of decisions, plans and actions on multiple dimensions and identity groups.
- Keeps an open mind to diverse ideas and new ways of thinking.

RATING SCALE: CHOOSE AN ITEM.

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LEADERSHIP EVALUATION

Intern recognizes and capitalizes on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.

Sample behaviors:

- Seeks out and leverages resources and feedback from others to inform direction.
- Exhibits a self-motivated approach to work.
- Serves as a role model to others by approaching tasks with confidence and a positive attitude.
- Demonstrates ability to plan, manage, complete and evaluate projects.

RATING SCALE: CHOOSE AN ITEM.

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PROFESSIONALISM EVALUATION

Knowing environments differ greatly, intern understands and shows effective work habits, and acts in the interest of the larger community and workplace. Sample behaviors:

- Exhibits professional behavior and attitude.
- Reports to work and meetings as scheduled and on-time.
- Shows an elevated level of dedication toward doing an excellent job.
- Maintains a positive personal brand in alignment with organization and personal career values.

RATING SCALE: CHOOSE AN ITEM.

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TEAMWORK EVALUATION

Intern builds and keeps collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities. Sample behaviors:

- Listens carefully to others, taking time to understand and ask proper questions without interrupting.
- Effectively manages conflict and meets ambiguity with resilience.
- Exercises the ability to compromise and be agile.
- Builds collaborative, positive working relationships with supervisor and team members/coworkers.

RATING SCALE: CHOOSE AN ITEM.

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TECHNOLOGY EVALUATION

Intern understands and leverages technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and carry out goals. Sample behaviors:

- Adapts quickly to new or unfamiliar technologies.
- Uses technology to carry out a given task.
- Uses technology to improve efficiency and productivity of their work.

RATING SCALE: CHOOSE AN ITEM.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN & OVERALL FEEDBACK

- What advice do you have for them entering this career field?
- What strengths do you believe they should leverage and how?
- What are their greatest opportunities for growth?

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