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Internship Guide for Employers: Writing an Internship Description

Structuring Your Internship

Before writing an internship description, ask yourself the following questions:

- **Do you have an appropriate supervisor who has sufficient expertise in the area of the internship?** The internship supervisor should be able to teach the intern best practices and answer detailed technical questions about the internship responsibilities.
- **Will they be onsite at the internship and able to watch first-hand how the intern performs and do they have enough time to spend teaching the intern?** An internship is usually a student's first professional experience and there will be a learning curve.
- **Is that supervisor on-board with mentoring an intern?** Make sure the supervisor understands what is expected of them and shares the same goals.
- **Do you have some clear-cut learning objectives for the internship?** Consider writing a syllabus of things you want the intern to learn. There is often a gap between college and the professional world - think about how to close that gap and train them for the professional world.
- **Do you have a list of pre-professional tasks for the intern, both short term & long term? Do you have some intern projects they can work on if there is downtime?** It is natural for things to be busy sometimes- make it clear to the intern what they can work on when this happens. Sometimes it is helpful to have the intern work on a sample project so they have a safe place to be creative and get more involved with some work.
- **Are there opportunities to network with staff, clients, stakeholders?**
- **Are there opportunities to shadow projects, presentations, meetings, other staff/departments?**
- **Do you have a regular schedule for the intern?** Make sure you set a schedule that works for both you and the intern. Interns will need to meet a minimum of 135 hours in a semester for credit- make sure you can offer that. Most students intern 10-20 hours per week during a school year and are more flexible over the summer.
- **Can you pay an hourly rate?** Paid internships are encouraged. Offering an hourly paid internship will allow the intern to be more committed to the internship and reduce the need for paid job that will compete for their time & priorities. Students can get credit for paid internships as well.
- **Do you have an internship manual?** It will be helpful to create a guide for your intern(s) to cover your workplace late and sick policies, expectations (ie.how lunch breaks work), tasks, and projects.

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Additional tips:

- Offer an internship orientation at your company
- Offer job shadowing opportunities in various in-house departments
- Offer opportunities to conduct informational interviews with other staff members
- Hold an intern brown bag lunches with senior staff
- Offer guidance on professional development within your industry

Writing An Internship Description

- Clearly outline all internship tasks, duties, responsibilities, and potential projects
- Describe the training and mentorship that will be offered and what skills/experience will be gained
- Describe how the skills/experience will be valuable across your industry and what career it will prepare the intern for
- Describe the professional background of the supervisor/mentor and what they have to offer
- List the types of staff member/clients/people the intern will come into contact with and the potential for building relationships/networking
- Describe the specific skills/qualifications/abilities you are seeking. Keep in mind qualifications should be in the realm of what an undergraduate level student would gain from their classes. Interns typically would not have much prior professional experience

Limit the hours to 10-20 during the academic year and offer flexibility if possible.

See *"Internship v.s. Job"* on page 3.

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Internship vs. Job

In some cases it may be worth considering whether an internship is the right fit for your organization. If you lack the time or supervision to train an intern, creating a job opportunity may be more suitable. Here are some tips to help determine which opportunity type is the best fit for your goals.

Internship	Job
- Primarily for training purposes	- Primarily serves and supports a business need
- Has specific learning objectives	- Does not have specific learning objectives
- Is not essential to business operations	- Is essential to business operations - Does work that helps generate revenue for the business
- Offers pre-professional tasks and training for current college students	- Employee brings expertise & professional experience
- For current college students - College level experience needed only	- Is expected to hit the ground running
- Is an extension of academic experience and connected to curriculum	- Is not connected to a curriculum
- Skills are developed in professional environment Intern shadows staff & business activities	- May also manage projects, staff, clients - May assist with routine, menial, administrative, production work or as staff for peak times or events
- Skills developed are transferable to other workplaces	- Skills developed are transferable to other workplaces
- Intern is closely mentored by staff with expertise in internship area (similar to a teacher-student relationship) - Feedback is given to facilitate learning process	- Employee has enough expertise to manage responsibilities and needs minimal guidance - Works independently and/or as a part of a team
- Intern meets professionals and begins building a professional network	- Employee begins building a professional network
- Must be located onsite at an organization business location	- May work onsite or remotely
- Short term with a fixed start and end date - Future employment is not mentioned or promised	- May be full time, part time, freelance, contract, as needed by employer