Steps for Getting Started with My Internship

Each of the steps outlined here describe the best practices, as well as some reflective questions you should be thinking about in order to land and get the most out of your internship experience.

Step 1: Obtaining the rules and regulations governing your internship program:

- Where can I get a written description of my school’s internship program? Is there a list of recommended internships related to my field of interest?
- How many internship hours must I complete during a semester?
- Who will evaluate my internship performance?
- Will I receive credit or a grade for my internship?
- Do I arrange my own internship, or will someone else make the initial contact for me?
- Is this internship integrated with my regularly scheduled classes or not?
- Does the internship utilize learning contracts/documents in which the internship participant, employer, and sponsor acknowledge agreed-upon objectives?
- Can I expect an on-site visit from a faculty sponsor?
- Does a required class or seminar accompany my internship? Will I have projects, assignments, papers, or presentations to complete?
- Will I receive a stipend, reimbursement for expenses, or an hourly wage?
- Must I sign a waiver absolving my school of responsibility if I am injured while at my internship site?
- What transportation arrangements must I make?

Step 2: Setting your internship goals:

- How will my internship help in developing career-related experiences?
- How will my internship assist in developing valuable knowledge related to my field?
- What do I want to gain from my internship?
- How do I want to be enriched by my experiences?
- Beyond enhancing my resume with career-related experiences, and building contacts for a future job search, are there any other valuable goals that my internship can help me attain?

Step 3: Identifying what you can offer to the employer (what can you do for them?):

- Computer skills: Basic knowledge of personal or mainframe computers, word processing or spreadsheet software, html, Microsoft PowerPoint, web publishing applications, among others
- Communication skills: Writing, public speaking, instructing
- Artistic skills: Designing flyers, creating digital posters, creating logos
- Organizational skills: Coordinating, managing, administering
- Foreign language
- Positive Attitude, enthusiasm, willingness to tackle any task, eagerness to learn
Good work behavior: Punctuality, ability to meet deadlines, careful attention to details
Cross cultural skills
Technical skills
Other

Step 4: Getting it together:

- Prepare your resume and cover letter.
- Make contact with employers. In some cases, your initial contact with employers will be made by a professor, an internship coordinator, or a recruiter. In other cases, however, you will be responsible for making the contact yourself, by either calling a prospective internship site or sending your resume with an accompanying cover letter.
- Prepare for the internship interview, define clear goals, research the organization, review interview questions, prepare some samples of your work to share, and prepare questions to ask your interviewer. Follow up your interview with a Thank You Letter to show your appreciation for the interviewer’s time, and reiterate your interest in the position. Practice mock interviewing with a career expert at your Career Services Office. In addition, you can see the Lesson: Fit: Effective Interview Skills in the Job & Internship Search Plan module.

Step 5: Making the most of your internship:

- What typical emotional responses do interns have, and how can I best handle my feelings?
- How do I get started? Would I fit in?
- How do I communicate with my supervisor? Should I ask for feedback?
- How do I ask my supervisor for a more challenging assignment?
- How do I ask for clarification or help?
- Can I turn down a request?
- How do I receive negative feedback? Or, how do I handle mistakes?
- How do I make my supervisor and co-workers members of my network?
- How’s my internship shaping up overall?

Step 6: Exiting your internship:

- Did I meet my learning objectives? Explain how.
- What was my most important contribution?
- In what ways did was my internship disappointing?
- What new skills did I develop or hone?
- How did my relationship with my supervisor either help or hinder in meeting my goals?
- What were the highlights of my internship?
- List tips for future interns who select this site.
Step 7: Communicating the value of your internship:

• Your next step is to update your resume, using compelling language to effectively communicate your improved experience, knowledge, and skills to potential employers. Visit your Career Services Office to assist you in this process. We’ll take a look at a few examples of updating your resume later in this module.
• Secure letters of recommendation from your internship supervision.
• Complete your Career Services Office surveys to communicate the value of your internship experience.