



Independent Internship Resource Guide

Congratulations on taking the initiative to find and manage an Independent Internship! Whether this is your first-ever internship experience or you have completed an internship before, this guide contains resources for students who have secured an internship at an organization off-campus and will not receive academic credit or formalized supervision from a faculty member.

These resources will help you navigate and make the most of your internship, particularly if you are at an internship site where perhaps you are their first intern, or they do not have a formalized and structured program. The Career Center wants to make sure you have a positive internship experience in which you contribute what you have learned in the classroom to your organization, while learning and developing core skills and competencies that will prepare you for a successful transition into the workplace upon graduation.

The handouts in this packet are simply recommendations and scaffolding for you to adapt and fit to your role's context.

Internship Position Description — pg. 2

Use this template to clarify your duties and responsibilities with your employer, if you do not already have a formalized position description.

Learning Goals — pg. 3

Creating focused learning goals and reviewing them with your supervisor is a crucial component when you are self-directing an internship. Use this handout to help guide your goal-setting.

Questions for Reflection — pg. 6

Use these questions to guide journaling or conversations with a mentor as you reflect on professional growth, and process what you find enjoyable, meaningful, and challenging in your role.

Final Feedback Conversation — pg. 7

Use this to guide final feedback from your supervisor. Discuss observations about your accomplishments, strengths, and opportunities they see for continued growth and professional development.

Reporting Your Experience — pg. 9

At the beginning of your internship, please report your experience to the University of Portland in [Handshake](#). This takes less than 5 minutes. You will be eligible for the [Intern of the Year Award](#), and we want to know which employers hire our awesome students!

Internships as Exploration

Remember, internships are *designed* to be temporary, typically an 8–12 week “test run” where interns get to explore one organization to see if it aligns with your values and interests. If you thrive in your internship? Great! If you do not enjoy the position or organization—better to know now and explore other opportunities in the future. Using experience as a tool for exploration can help you refine, confirm or redirect your strengths, values, interests and personality fit.

You will develop transferable skills regardless of the specific tasks and projects of your internship. Think about an internship as one exploratory step in your career journey, and not a lifelong commitment to this organization. A curiosity-driven mindset will take you far in your internship, regardless of what industry or discipline you are in.

Internship Position Description

It is crucial for an intern to have a formalized position description. This should outline duties, responsibilities, compensation and a basic schedule so that both the intern and the employer have a mutual understanding and aligned expectations from the outset of the experience. This is most important if you created an internship through a connection rather than having applied to a posted position online. Some of this may be included in an offer letter from the organization. The most important thing is to have all these components in writing.

What should be included in an internship position description?

The sections below offer a guiding framework for internship position descriptions.

- **Title for the internship**
- **Description of duties**
 - An outline of the main objectives, tasks and priorities of the internship
 - Action verbs usually describe the main responsibilities or tasks for the position
 - The organization's name, mission or values are referenced in this section
 - Outlining the learning components or competencies that the student will gain as an intern establishes that the position is primarily learning-based
- **Qualifications required or preferred**
 - Skills, knowledge, training or education that the intern should possess to be successful
 - Preference for specific year in school or coursework desired
 - Qualifications can be listed as preferred or desired, but not necessarily required
 - To comply with Equal Employment Opportunity laws, discriminating factors such as gender, age, ethnicity should never be included
- **Compensation information**
 - Hourly wage and/or stipend
 - Additional benefits that are "perks" of the internship (e.g., travel reimbursement, lunch vouchers, tickets to events, etc.)
- **Internship Duration**
 - The minimum number of hours per week (if applicable) or total hours for the entire internship period is included
 - The start and end dates (even if only generally listed – e.g., spring semester)
 - Agreed-upon work schedule
- **Supervisor and team information**
 - Who will the intern report to?
 - Supervisor and mentor information



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Learning Goals

To make the most of your internship, a key first step is to outline what you plan to gain out of it by setting learning goals! In addition to building skills, internships are valuable because they create a **sense of purpose** - both personal and professional - based on what you learn and the types of activities that you accomplish during your internship.

Why is goal setting important?

At its core, goal setting helps you build the framework for a valuable internship learning experience.

Goals assist you in your internship by keeping you:

1. Motivated while moving through the transition of student life to professional life;
2. On task so that you have direction and clarity about your day to day duties;
3. Aware of a standard against which to measure your growth and progress as an intern;
4. **Focused on getting what you want to develop out of the internship - not just what the employer wants!**

Goals should be mutually beneficial!

Your supervisor's input will be valuable in determining the feasibility of goals to make sure that you are carrying out agreed upon activities and projects that meet both of your needs for the internship. You have specific goals that you want to accomplish and your supervisor has specific duties that need to be done.

You may be confronted during your internship with changes in what you are doing from day to day depending on the needs of the organization. If you have solid goals set prior to the internship, you will be better equipped to gear your day to day performance towards meeting those goals. *Research has shown that the act alone of setting goals has the ability to ensure that you meet at least some if not all of what you want to achieve.*

How do I set goals?

Based on the mutually agreed upon job description which outlines your tasks and responsibilities, you can create goals that focus on different areas of development:

- **Knowledge development:** understanding factual information associated with the industry or profession, and application of discipline-specific theories or concepts ("I will learn, understand, develop, etc.")
- **Professional career development:** exploring different career interests and learning about professions ("I will explore, talk to, etc.")
- **Skill development:** gaining skills and competencies that employers look for; this can be a combination of technical skills and [career competencies](#) ("I will acquire, conduct, create, schedule, build, etc.")

The best goals will be specific, actionable, and measurable. Consider the following as you develop your goals:

- **Specific:** What exactly do you want to achieve or develop? How? When? What is your timeline to achieve this overall goal? Are there milestones needed along the way?
- **Action Steps Needed:** Is your goal realistic and attainable given the available time and resources? What steps are needed? Who you will consult or shadow? What resources will you need?
- **Measurable:** How will you objectively measure your success? How will you know when you have met this goal? What tangible outcomes will you see (metrics) or hear (feedback) when you reach your goal?

Here are some example learning goals:

- ***I will understand the complete development and testing process for an iOS application by writing high quality source code for the beta release of the HealthNET Application at the end of July.***
 - This is a knowledge and skill-based goal. It is specific in learned outcome, deliverable, and timeline.
- ***I will meet with and shadow managers in different departments of marketing and product development to see which area interests me more.***
 - This is an exploratory professional development goal. The activity itself is specific and measurable in that it either will happen or not, but open-ended in terms of *how* and *when* it will happen.
- ***I will improve my public speaking and presentation skills by delivering a cumulative presentation on my research and findings to key stakeholders at various levels of the company, after weekly presentation-updates to my team for the entirety of the project.***
 - This skill development goal has a very specific deadline and tangible outcome, as well as weekly milestones outlined along the way.
- ***I will develop an understanding of fundraising event work by helping organize and run the OMSI Fundraising Gala event in August.***
 - This is another knowledge and skill-based goal. It is focused around one particular event with a timeline.
- ***I will write and distribute a press release by drafting and submitting one for the upcoming product launch pop-up party happening in October.***
 - This is a skill-based goal that is specific, measurable and has a timeline.

Communicate early and check in often!

Share these goals with your supervisor at the start of your internship so they can give meaningful assignments to you and incorporate relevant learning experiences throughout your time at the organization. When you communicate these goals to your supervisor and team, it creates transparency about what you are hoping to gain from the experience. Together you can evaluate your goals and create a roadmap towards achieving them. They cannot help you meet your goals if you have not communicated them.

It is recommended that you have regular check-ins with your internship supervisor. One topic you should periodically check in about is progress regarding your learning goals.



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Create your own Learning Goals

Intern name:

Intern Title:

Organization:

Learning Goal #1:

Action Steps – What, when, where and how will you accomplish your goal?

Measurement of Goal – How will you objectively measure your success? What are the metrics?

Learning Goal #2:

Action Steps – What, when, where and how will you accomplish your goal?

Measurement of Goal – How will you objectively measure your success? What are the metrics?

Learning Goal #3:

Action Steps – What, when, where and how will you accomplish your goal?

Measurement of Goal – How will you objectively measure your success? What are the metrics?

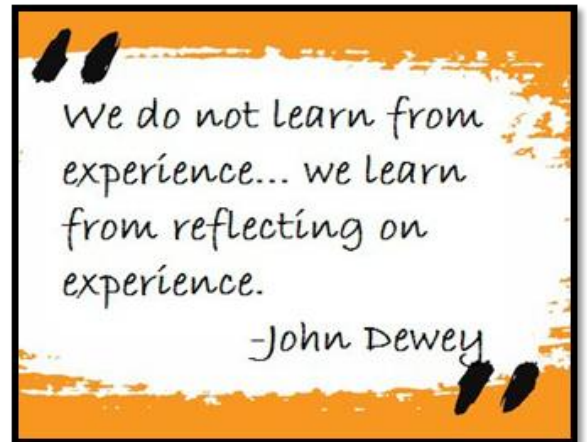
Learning Goal #4:

Action Steps – What, when, where and how will you accomplish your goal?

Measurement of Goal – How will you objectively measure your success? What are the metrics?

Questions for Reflection

One of the most important practices you can implement during your internship is continual reflection throughout the experience. You can keep a journal, weekly log of activities, or record voice memos on your phone—whatever works best for you. Taking time to reflect will help you make mental connections, discover what you enjoy and find meaningful, and might provide discernment around challenges you face during your internship.



For mid-point reflection

- Which of your strengths are becoming apparent as effective tools in this internship and why? What affirms you in this role?
- In general, would you say the tasks you have been given so far have over-challenged you, under-challenged you, or been about right?
- Take a look at the learning goals you set for yourself at the beginning of the internship. Which of these has been met, not met, or is in process? Do you feel proud of what you've accomplished, disappointed in what you thought you'd be doing but haven't yet, or a combo of the two?
- What else have you been learning?
- Have you and your supervisor experienced conflict? If so, how did that happen? How was it resolved?
- How is your confidence level *now* compared to at the start of the internship?
- How has the organization compared to your expectations? What are the unwritten values or norms that you've learned about the workplace?
- How does your role, within this organization, impact the greater needs of the community?
- How are you growing professionally through challenges that you've faced in this role?

For continued reflection after your internship

- What did you like best about the internship and why? Least?
- How are you different now than when your internship first started?
- What progress did you make on the learning goals you established at the beginning of your internship?
- What do you consider your greatest accomplishment? Were there any goals that you did not accomplish? What are your plans for working on them?
- What are your thoughts on how the work you've done during your internship connects to your vision of your future self?
- What new knowledge, skills, insights, and professional vocabulary have you gained from this internship?
- What interests have been sparked as a result of this experience?
- Was there anything that this internship confirmed you **do not** enjoy doing? Does this surprise you? Why?



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Final Feedback Conversation

Towards the end of the internship, it is important to get some final feedback from your supervisor. Ask to arrange a time where you can have a formal discussion about your accomplishments, strengths, and opportunities they see for continued growth and professional development. Prior to the discussion, reflect on your growth and demonstration of the skills below, which can serve as a guide for the conversation. You are encouraged to share this handout with your supervisor before the conversation as well, to get their insight on your performance in these specific areas.

Internships are a great way for students to apply classroom learning in professional settings. Career readiness is the attainment and demonstration of core skills and competencies that broadly prepare college students for a successful transition into the workplace upon graduation. Through this internship, you have developed and demonstrated many of these competencies! The following section is based on the eight core competencies identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).

For questions 1-8, circle your level of demonstration per competency.

1. Critical Thinking & Problem Solving: I exercise sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions and overcome problems. I obtain, interpret and use knowledge, facts and data in this process and may demonstrate originality and inventiveness.

1 - Acquiring (demonstrate rarely) 2 - Advancing (demonstrate sometimes) 3 - Accomplished (demonstrate consistently) 0 - NA

2. Oral/Written Communications: I articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in written and oral forms to persons inside and outside of the organization. I have public speaking skills; am able to express ideas to others; and can write/edit memos, letters, and complex technical reports clearly and effectively.

1 - Acquiring (demonstrate rarely) 2 - Advancing (demonstrate sometimes) 3 - Accomplished (demonstrate consistently) 0 - NA

3. Teamwork/Collaboration: I build collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers representing diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, religions, lifestyles, and viewpoints. I am able to work within a team structure, and can negotiate and manage conflict.

1 - Acquiring (demonstrate rarely) 2 - Advancing (demonstrate sometimes) 3 - Accomplished (demonstrate consistently) 0 - NA

4. Digital Technology: I leverage existing digital technologies ethically and efficiently to solve problems, complete tasks, and accomplish goals. I demonstrate effective adaptability to new and emerging technologies.

1 - Acquiring (demonstrate rarely) 2 - Advancing (demonstrate sometimes) 3 - Accomplished (demonstrate consistently) 0 - NA

5. Leadership: I leverage the strengths of others to achieve common goals, and use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others. I am able to assess and manage my emotions and those of others; use empathetic skills to guide and motivate; and organize, prioritize, and delegate work.

1 - Acquiring (demonstrate rarely) 2 - Advancing (demonstrate sometimes) 3 - Accomplished (demonstrate consistently) 0 - NA

6. Professionalism/Work Ethic: I demonstrate personal accountability and effective work habits, e.g., punctuality, working productively with others, and time workload management, and understand the impact of non-verbal communication on professional work image. I demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior, acts responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind, and am able to learn from my mistakes.

1 - Acquiring (demonstrate rarely) 2 - Advancing (demonstrate sometimes) 3 - Accomplished (demonstrate consistently) 0 – NA

7. Career Management: I can identify and articulate my skills, strengths, knowledge, and experiences relevant to the position desired and career goals, and identify areas necessary for professional growth. I am able to navigate and explore job options, understand and can take the steps necessary to pursue opportunities, and understand how to self-advocate for opportunities in the workplace.

1 - Acquiring (demonstrate rarely) 2 - Advancing (demonstrate sometimes) 3 - Accomplished (demonstrate consistently) 0 – NA

8. Global/Intercultural Fluency: I value, respect, and learn from diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and religions. I demonstrate openness, inclusiveness, sensitivity, and the ability to interact respectfully with all people and understand individuals' differences.

1 - Acquiring (demonstrate rarely) 2 - Advancing (demonstrate sometimes) 3 - Accomplished (demonstrate consistently) 0 – NA

My outstanding work qualities are:

The work qualities I should strive to continue developing are:

In what ways have you changed as a result of this experience (i.e., new skills developed, self-discoveries, career awareness, new knowledge acquired)?

How do you plan to effectively use the remainder of your time at this internship site? (ex: completing informational interviews, seeking final feedback, connecting on LinkedIn, etc).

What do you consider your greatest accomplishment? Were there any learning goals that you did not accomplish? What are your plans for working on them?



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Reporting Your Experience to UP:

At the beginning of your internship, please report your experience to the University of Portland in [Handshake](#). **This takes less than 5 minutes.** You will be eligible for the [Intern of the Year Award](#), and we want to know which employers hire our awesome students!

1. Log into Handshake

- www.joinhandshake.com
- or sign in on University of Portland Single Sign on Portal.

2. Click on Experiences

- This can be found under the Career Center drop down menu located in the top right corner.

3. Click on Request an Experience

- Can be found on the top of the screen.

4. Select your Experience Type and Term

- Please SELECT INDEPENDENT INTERNSHIP and what term you will be completing your internship.

5. Fill Out the Employer Information

- If you do not see your employer on the drop-down menu, please type your own.

6. Fill Out the Job Information

- If you do not see your job title on the drop-down menu, please type your own, as well as include the information asked about your job description.

7. Additional Details

- Let us know how you found the internship, and whether it was remote.
- If you are comfortable with providing your supervisor's contact information, please do. We will use this to notify them about Intern of the Year Award nominations.

8. Suggestions for your independent internship

- Review the list of best practices for your internship. These are detailed in the [Independent Internship Resource Guide](#).
 - Obtain a clear position description, start and end dates, and rate of pay.
 - Create 4-6 learning goals to guide and focus your internship.
 - Ask for weekly check-ins, routine feedback, and an end of internship evaluation conversation.

9. Internship Disclaimer

- Please read the disclaimer thoroughly. After reading the Independent Internship Disclaimer click on CREATE EXPERIENCE!

For information and guidelines for **virtual or remote internships**, please review the [Virtual Internship Guidelines handout](#) on our website.

Resources to support your experiential learning as a UP student:

As a UP student you have access to many campus resources that may be helpful to support your holistic wellbeing, including: [Employees who are Confidential Resources](#), the [Health and Counseling Center](#), [Title IX](#) and [Campus Ministry](#) that you can talk to if needed. The [Career Center](#) is also here to support you as you participate in experiential learning; reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

If you have questions, please contact:

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Adapted from:

University of California, Irvine | Donald Bren School of Information & Computer Sciences' "Internship Learning Plan"
University of Minnesota | College of Liberal Arts' "CLA Career Readiness Internship Guide: Making the Most of Your Internship"