



# Internship Guide for Employers

## *Your guide to supervising a Pilot Intern*

**Thank you for supervising a Pilot Intern from the University of Portland!** Your expertise and mentorship will be a valuable resource for their professional growth this semester. We hope that their contributions and fresh perspectives make a lasting impact at your organization. In this guide you will find:

- Components of a quality internship and benefits for both interns and employers
- Intern stages of development
- Best practices for internship supervisors

### **But first, what is an internship?**

**The University of Portland defines an internship as:** *A form of supervised experiential learning that combines critical thinking and intentional reflection within a framework of a liberal arts education. By completing internships, students are able to sharpen professional skills, develop career interests and employer contacts, assess strengths, and connect classroom theories to practical, real world settings. Internships offer employers the ability to evaluate and mentor upcoming talent.*<sup>1</sup>

Components of a quality internship include:

- The experience must be an **extension of the classroom**: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom.
- The skills or knowledge learned must be **transferable** to other employment settings.
- The experience has a **defined duration**, and a **job description** with desired qualifications.
- There are **clearly defined learning objectives**/duties outlined by the employer prior to the intern beginning the internship.
- There is **supervision by a professional** with expertise and background in the field of the internship.
- There is **routine feedback** by the experienced supervisor.
- There are **resources**, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals (e.g., computers, desk, training materials).

### **How are internships mutually beneficial?**

| Benefits for students   | Benefits for Employers   |
|---|--|
| Gaining an understanding of different careers and evaluate their career path.   | An opportunity to strengthen recruitment and hiring efforts with a continuous pool of highly qualified students  |
| Setting and accomplishing work-related goals  | Interns are enthusiastic, bring new ideas and provide fresh perspectives   |
| Developing and demonstrating <a href="#">core skills and competencies</a> , as well as gaining experience that make them more attractive candidates to recruiters | Helping future talent develop, demonstrate and hone <a href="#">core skills and competencies</a> that will prepare them for a successful transition to the workplace |
| Confidence gained when they have tangible evidence of their contributions and growth  | Supervising interns allows employees to gain supervisory/mentorship experience as a professional development point   |
| Connecting with professionals in a field or organization of interest  | Internship programs promote community involvement by teaching the prospective work force—a great public relations tool   |
| Chance to apply classroom knowledge and training to professional context.   | Interns can support projects that employees otherwise might not have time to complete  |

<sup>1</sup> Note. Based off of the [“NACE Position Statement on U.S. Internships,”](#) Adopted by the NACE Board of Directors July 2011.

## **Establishing expectations is important**

Each participant in the internship has expectations and in an ideal scenario, they all align. This may be the first time your intern has worked in a professional work environment which necessitates initiative in communicating work-related goals and expectations. The sooner you begin an open conversation about expectations in this new environment, the more comfortable they will be coming to you with questions or concerns.

### Students expect from their employer:

- A clear job description
- A chance to apply classroom knowledge and training
- An opportunity to contribute ideas
- Effective supervision / mentorship
- Assigned work that is meaningful
- Support towards meeting the learning goals that they define at the beginning of the internship
- An opportunity to earn credit and/or be paid
- An opportunity to build relationships and network
- The ability to reflect on course learning in the context of the experience

### Employer site provides intern:

- A clearly defined role in the organization and workspace. This includes a complete job description, defined start and end dates, and expected hours per week
- Thorough onboarding and orientation to the organization
- Defined learning objectives that are consistent with the student's academic course of study
- Exposure to as many parts of the organization as is possible
- An opportunity for consistent mentoring, training and feedback
- An opportunity to see realistic professional tasks representative of the industry

### Faculty supervisor provides (*only if student is receiving academic credit for the internship*):

- A means to earn academic credit
- A well-crafted set of learning objectives connecting student learning with experience in the field
- Advising for the duration of the internship
- An assessment of the intern's performance
- Varied course assignments that provide guided learning and reflection applying classroom theories to a professional work environment

### **Supervisor Tip:**

***Generational differences impact working relationships and communication!*** When supervising interns, note some Gen Z workplace values:

Independent and collaborative work | Making an impact | Creative, new ideas | Entrepreneurship |  
Explicit expectations and being told the "why" | Being given resources | Customized and unique  
experiences | Diversity and inclusion | Hands-on learning



# Internship Guide for Employers

## *Your guide to supervising a Pilot Intern*

### **Intern Stages of Development**

As the intern navigates and familiarizes themselves with this new professional work environment, their confidence and abilities will grow over time. Here is the typical process of development for interns, their feelings per stage, and how you can support them:

- 1. Anticipation:** Student seeks out and secures internship, holding idealistic expectations for their experience. As they prepare to start, they feel excited and highly motivated, while at the same time nervous and self-doubting.
  - ***What you can do:*** From the outset, take an interest in their learning goals and help them during the adjustment from classroom to workplace.
- 2. Exploration:** Upon initial arrival at site, the intern learns a lot of new information and begins establishing a workplace identity and understanding of the organizational culture. During this orientation period, they are overloaded with information and may feel underutilized and underwhelmed by routine tasks. The sooner the intern understands what the organization does and how it operates, the sooner they can assume assigned responsibilities and become productive. Workplace structure is very different than the classroom and might take some adjustment.
  - ***What you can do:*** Provide clear instructions. Encourage them to come to you with questions through regular check-in meetings. Let them know that this is normal and expected, but requires their initiative.
- 3. Contribution:** Starting to feel more settled in their role and confident in their abilities, the intern productively accomplishes tasks and seeks new projects and responsibilities. Over time, the intern feels an increased sense of self-confidence, productivity, familiarity and independence. They are more accustomed to the social and cultural work environment, connecting with other interns and colleagues.
  - ***What you can do:*** Provide a participatory framework in which the intern can bring new ideas to the table, and seek additional development opportunities such as: joining in meetings, conducting informational interviews, or shadowing other departments.
- 4. Culmination:** Nearing the end of the internship, the intern will evaluate their performance and experience, identify transferable skills and engage in closure with colleagues and clients. They might feel extreme satisfaction and accomplishment if they met their learning goals and can see what they contributed to the organization. However, they also might feel sadness about leaving, fear of not being recognized by colleagues, disappointment at incomplete projects or unmet goals, and jealousy at incoming interns.
  - ***What you can do:*** Provide the intern with a chance to present their project or findings to a broader audience, and encourage student self-reflection while providing feedback on their contributions. Let the intern know if you are an available reference and professional connection for them moving forward.

## **Best practices for supervising an intern**

This may be the first time your intern has worked in professional work environment and is applying classroom theories in a real-world context. The more support and tools you equip them with in this new environment, the more easily they will adapt and begin contributing to your organization in meaningful ways.

### Setting up for success

- **Review student's learning goals together:** Prior to the academic internship, students must identify 4-6 learning goals to be completed during the course of the internship, which the supervisor will approve via the online Handshake Experience (Learning Agreement). Goals could incorporate desired industry-related knowledge, skills, and abilities required for successful career advancement. Work with the intern at the beginning of the internship to develop expectations and a plan to ensure that the established goals are met, and check in regularly throughout the internship to see if the intern is on track to meet these goals.
- **Thorough onboarding and orientation:** In order for the intern to get oriented and established in their new working environment, supervisors should plan for the intern's first day on the job to be focused on orientation and training. This should consist of: touring the facility, meeting other employees, learning about the organization, reviewing organization-wide communication standards and workplace expectations (including taking required legal breaks, lunches, and system of tracking hours), and reviewing the student's defined learning goals.
- **Give them real work assignments:** Interns crave having projects and deliverables that are going to make a difference within your organization. Provide detailed explanations of your expectations, and resources that the student has and might need in order to complete the task or project. Rather than just assigning tasks, give them context and communicate why the work is important. What is it contributing towards or connected to? How will this project contribute to the greater good of the department/organization?

### Encouraging growth and progress

- **Schedule regular check-ins:** Supervisors should meet with interns on a regular basis to provide consistent feedback. Students can share what they've been working on, ask questions, and together you both can discuss areas of strength and ongoing areas for development, and get a sense of what work might be coming up next.
- **Provide varied learning opportunities:** For most students, internships are a way to explore new industries and job functions that they have not yet had exposure to. Activities such as "lunch & learns" with executives, informational interviews, shadowing different departments, or professional development workshops all add value to the intern's personal and professional growth.
- **Promote skill development, documentation and reflection:** Students often have a difficult time recognizing and articulating the skills ("soft" and technical) that they develop while interning. Your guidance can help them reflect and see how key employability skills might be transferrable to future experiences inside and outside the classroom. Encourage them to keep work samples and talk about their accomplishments: what did you do? But more importantly, how did you do it? How did you get better at it over time?

### Providing Closure

- **Evaluating growth and progress:** Towards the end of the internship, we would encourage you to do evaluations with the intern. This builds student confidence, fosters reflection of skill acquisition and accomplishment, and brings to light opportunities for continued growth.



# Internship Guide for Employers

## *Your guide to supervising a Pilot Intern*

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

**If you have questions, please contact:**

Career Education Center  
internship@up.edu | 503.943.7201

**Adapted from:**

Bridge.Jobs' "Employer Guide: Creating a Meaningful Learning Experience for Students"

University of Minnesota College of Liberal Arts' "CLA Career Readiness Internship Guide: Making the Most of Your Internship"

University of Nebraska – Lincoln "Internship Toolkit for Employers"