

What is an Internship?

Defining 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.*¹

A search for a valuable internship experience requires an investment of time, dedication, patience, and effort on part of the student. Completing an internship search process empowers students to learn valuable career development strategies that will be used in future employment searches for the rest of their careers.

What makes a for a quality internship?

The University of Portland requests that all of the following criteria be addressed within an internship to ensure a quality internship experience.

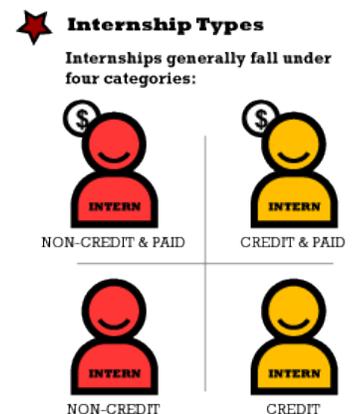
- The experience must be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom.
- The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.
- The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description 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).

University of Portland recognizes that while academic credit legitimizes an unpaid experience, in order to be identified as an internship, that experience must include all seven criteria.²

Internship Types

Internships vary in their ability to provide the student payment and/or academic credit for the experience. The four basic internship types include 1) non-credit and non-paid; 2) credit and non-paid; 3) non-credit and paid; and 4) credit and paid.

Ideally, the best scenario for a student is to receive credit and payment for his/her internship experience so that he/she is being propelled further towards graduation in completion of credits while receiving payment to offset the costs of completing the internship for credit.



Internship Compensation

A “for-profit” organization faces legal obligation under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) to provide eligible employees with at least the federally mandated minimum wage. However, if the intern is deemed as a “learner/trainee,” the

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

² Note. Based off of the [Department of Labor \(DOL\) Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#) and [NACE Position Statement.](#)

organization is not held to the same legal obligation for compensation. The Wage and Hour Division of the DOL has developed six criteria for identifying a learner/trainee who may be unpaid in the [Fact Sheet #71: Internship Programs under The Fair Labor Standards Act](#).

These criteria include:

1. The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training which would be given in an educational environment;
2. The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern;
3. The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff;
4. The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern; and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded;
5. The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; and
6. The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.

As noted in the Fact Sheet, “If all of the factors listed above are met, an employment relationship does not exist under the FLSA, and the Act’s minimum wage and overtime provisions do not apply to the intern.”

It is also noted in the Fact Sheet that “Unpaid internships in the public sector and non-profit charitable organizations, where the intern volunteers without expectation of compensation, are generally permissible.”

For internships that employers offer academic credit only for compensation, the University of Portland will assess the merits of the experience based on the above criteria first. In keeping with the spirit of the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#), and in recognition of the correlation between paid internships and employment opportunity, it is University of Portland’s preference that internships within for-profit organizations offer compensation in addition to receipt of course credit.

University of Portland Career Center will not post unpaid internship opportunities in for-profit organizations on the main job/internship board, [Handshake](#). *It is the student’s responsibility to arrange credit for an internship through his/her specific college forms and a signed University Internship Learning Agreement.*

What does a quality academic for-credit internship provide?

Student Perspective

An internship will offer me:

- 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
- An opportunity to earn credit and/or be paid
- An opportunity to build relationships and network
- The ability to reflect on my course learning in the context of the experience

Employer Perspective

An internship will provide:

- An opportunity to strengthen recruitment and hiring efforts
- Defined learning objectives that are consistent with the student’s academic course of study
- A clearly defined role in the organization and workspace
- An opportunity to challenge existing management by supervising an intern
- An opportunity for consistent mentoring, training and feedback for the intern

Faculty Perspective

An internship must include:

- A means to earn academic credit
- A well-crafted set of learning objectives connecting student learning with experience in the field
- Advising from a faculty member
- The ability to assess the internship site as effective for experiential learning
- The ability to assess the performance of the intern

What should be included in an internship position description?

When students research opportunities for internships, the position description (or “scope of work”) is the initial means of understanding a particular internship experience. A detailed guide for Developing a Position Description is located on the [Career Center website](#). To attract the best applicants for a position, the description should be as detailed and accurate as possible.

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

- Title for the internship**
- Description of duties**
 - An outline of the main focus, 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 ensures 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, stipend, for credit (can be a range or “depending on experience”)
 - 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)
 - If those items are flexible, please mention that in your job description
- Steps to apply and main contact**
 - Most commonly, a resume and cover letter are required
 - Employers may request additional materials such as short answer questions, a writing sample, portfolio, references, letters of recommendation, etc.
 - Contact information is recommended in case the applicant has questions prior to applying

The University of Portland currently uses [Handshake](#) to post all part-time, internship and job opportunities. Employers are encouraged to contact the Internship and Engagement Coordinator in UP’s Career Center at internship@up.edu or 503 943-7201 for assistance.