

# How to set up an Internship at your organization

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## What is an Internship? Advantages to Hiring an Intern

An internship is a supervised on-the-job learning experience related to a student's career interest. Interns have a designated set of responsibilities or a job description and are actively supported and evaluated by a supervisor or mentor. A solid internship provides the opportunity to learn about the field while allowing the intern to make a contribution to the organization's work.

The important elements that distinguish an internship from a short-term job or community service opportunity are a) the intentional **learning** agenda that the intern, in agreement with the employer, brings to the experience and b) the work is **career-related** for the student and c) the intern receives **evaluation** of their work from the supervisor. An intern should be **mentored** or supervised by someone within the company or organization that can offer career-related expertise.

It is well documented that students benefit greatly from an internship experience. Interns get the opportunity to apply knowledge learned in the classroom to the workplace. The student's career development is enhanced as they gain a knowledge of the qualifications and duties of a position and can explore their interest in a field. They gain crucial professional skills in decision making, critical thinking, as well as gaining increased confidence and self-esteem.

Employers also benefit from the internship experience. Interns can provide immediate short-term help to support projects that have been put on the back burner due to lack of staff time or to fill in for employees on temporary leave or vacation. They can also energize a workplace with their enthusiasm and desire to learn, as well as provide a very effective recruitment tool for new hires. Many of those who employ interns also report genuine satisfaction in helping to train new professionals to their field and giving them a start as someone once did for them.

## Internship Description

One of the initial steps in establishing an internship is developing a clear description of the student's duties and responsibilities and a well-defined set of expectations in relation to these assignments. Internship positions include **pre-professional activities similar to those of a new entrant in the field** and allow the intern to put classroom knowledge into practice through hands-on experience. This is an opportunity to educate the intern about your organization's culture, structure, practices, and goals.

At the foot of the job description, there should be a paragraph addressing the required **learning agenda** portion of the internship. It should read: "By the end of the internship the student would have had the opportunity to lead/participate in the following activities..."

## Qualifications

A well-defined outline of qualifications helps students evaluate their suitability for the position and is essential in order to establish a pool of appropriate candidates for an employer. Qualifications may include previous related experience, computer skills, technical skills, presentation skills, and other criteria pertinent to the position. Be sure to include any basic professional skills that may be required in your work such as punctuality, writing ability, phone skills, and ability to work without supervision after initial training.

## Hours Per Week

Internships involve enough work hours to allow students to gain valuable career-related experience and employers to obtain a measurable benefit from the student's work contributions. The average work schedule for internships during the academic year ranges from 8 to 20 hours per week; summer internships often range from 10 to 40 hours per week. The hours per week can vary. For example, an intern may work 10 hours per week while classes are in session and work 30 hours per week during winter and spring breaks. It is important for students and employers to discuss the work schedule together and develop a plan that will meet both their needs.

## Duration

When arranging an internship, it is important to set a specific duration of time. This limits the initial time commitment made by the employer and student and encourages discussion between them at the conclusion of the internship. If the employer and student wish to extend the internship, they can renegotiate this when the first work period is completed. Some common time frames for internships are summer, semester, and academic year.

HSU Spring Semester runs from the 3rd week of January to the middle of May. Fall Semester begins the 3rd week of August and ends in the middle of December.

## Timing for job announcements

Good timing for posting positions on Springboard for Fall semester, would be mid-Summer to early August. For positions you hope to begin in Spring semester, early November postings are most successful because of the time confliction of student's preparation for finals and leaving the area for the holidays. For Summer internships, late-February and early March are ideal.

## Supervision

Close communication between the supervisor and the intern is essential for a successful internship. It is best to have one overall supervisor who arranges training opportunities, schedules regular meetings to discuss questions and concerns, and monitors the intern's progress.

The supervisor will also handle the student's verbal and written job performance evaluation at the end of the internship. The evaluation process facilitates an open exchange between the supervisor and intern and can be essential for personal development and for internship program improvements.

## Evaluation

A job performance evaluation is a critical part of the internship or career-related experience. An evaluation helps the intern to acknowledge work strengths and areas for improvement. The supervisor can recommend specific coursework or technical experience for the student to pursue. This is a great opportunity for the intern to obtain letters of recommendation and establish a list of references for future jobs.

## Majors

If you know the work involved in your internship requires the classes or knowledge gained in a particular academic major, please indicate. Otherwise, leave this requirement open to "any major" and seek students who have the ability and skills needed to do the job.

## Compensation

In most cases, interns should be compensated with an hourly pay rate. Because of changes in labor laws, stipends are only allowable in the event that the compensation would cover at least the legal hourly minimum wage. According to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency, a monetary exchange of meals, living expenses, travel, goods, etc., do not constitute a substitution for wages. The California state minimum wage is \$8.00 per hour and interns cannot be paid below this wage.

## Unpaid Internships

The HSU Career Center can list unpaid internships for employers if the experience: a) Strictly adheres to the Internship criteria guidelines on page one of this guide; b) If the employer agrees in advance to not allow the student to work unless the experience is approved by an HSU faculty advisor and agrees to allow the student to earn college credit for the internship; c) The Springboard job posting reads: **“This internship is unpaid and available to Humboldt State University students on a for-credit basis only,”** and d) The employer agrees to secure all necessary Worker’s Compensation and liability coverage for their student hire.

## Insurance and Payroll Administration

The employer will pay the student’s hourly wages or stipend, provide worker’s compensation insurance (even if the position is a volunteer internship), comply with all laws regarding withholding and payment of payroll taxes, and complete I-9 forms. Employers are required to cover income, social security and Medicare taxes on stipends. Refer to Internal Revenue Service forms 15 and 15-A or visit [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) for more information.

## Academic Credit

If arrangements are made with faculty, the student may be able to receive academic credit for a major-related internship. Credit must be organized and approved through an academic department before the internship begins. HSU academic departments differ on their willingness to offer credit for internships. Students need to inquire about this possibility at their department before accepting the internship if they desire to receive credit.

Students may be required to write research papers, keep a job journal, conduct informational interviews, and complete evaluations. If academic credit has been arranged with a Humboldt State University faculty member, appropriate agreement forms will need to be completed. The student, employer and the HSU faculty member will agree on the terms of the internship.

## Training

Training educates interns about your organization’s structure, practices, and goals. Learning opportunities may include:

1. A company tour and formal or informal workplace orientation
2. Review of employee handbook or position duties and goals of position
3. Attend meetings with staff members from different departments
4. Job shadowing (following a staff member for a period of time to observe job duties)
5. Attend regular staff meetings
6. Attend and participate in in-house or off-site workshops and seminars
7. On-the-job training by supervisor and by other staff members in diverse positions
8. Work assignments that require critical thinking and decision-making skills.

## Examples of HSU internships posted by local employers

### Research Associate Intern

#### Job Description

Student needed for an intern position at the California Center for Rural Policy (CCRP). The California Center for Rural Policy is a research center committed to informing policy, building community, and promoting the health and well-being of rural people and environments. CCRP is located on HSU's campus.

The intern will assist the Health Policy Analyst by researching affordable housing policy. Research for this project will include gathering data about various housing needs for certain populations. Other data gathered will be the cost of housing in both counties, and the availability of housing units.

The intern will be making phone calls to various city and county agencies on the North Coast to determine what affordable housing plans are being implemented in the short and long term. This position requires a detailed-oriented individual with strong interpersonal and writing skills. The intern will report directly to the Health Policy Analyst.

#### Qualifications

- Ability to conduct research using the internet, databases, and phone interviews.
- Ability to analyze data gathered and report results in a succinct manner.
- Have a strong desire to help rural and underserved populations.
- Excellent writing and communication skills.
- Must be self-directed and motivated.
- Must be well organized.

### Zoo Administration Intern

#### Job Description

This internship is an excellent opportunity to gain in depth knowledge about the operation of a non-profit organization related to education, recreation and conservation of wild animals. This internship will touch on five main skills needed to run this, and other, organizations: Research, Event Planning, Outreach, Fundraising, and Administration. Tasks vary depending on the time of year and our Events calendar but can include help with our quarterly newsletter, publicity for events and campaigns, data entry, research projects, event organization and execution, bulk mailing and other tasks as assigned.

#### Qualifications

Looking for a motivated self-starter who is reliable and has good computer skills. Must be able to interact with a wide range of people in a professional manner. An interest in natural resources, wildlife, conservation or non-profit administration a must.