

# EMPLOYERS GUIDE FOR STARTING AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



**HARTNELLCOLLEGE**

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This guide is not intended as, and should not be considered, a substitute for legal or other professional advice, and its contents are subject to change. You are responsible for ensuring that your intern program complies with Federal and State laws.

# Career Preparation & Placement Services

The Career Prep and Placement Services (CPPS) office is the central hub for career technical education internships and employment services at Hartnell College. Employers interested in creating an internship program or posting current internship opportunities for students can contact the CPPS office at anytime. Our office officially opened its doors in January of 2018. Since then, the office has developed two main focuses. One is to get students engaged and ready for internship/job placements and the other is getting students in placements within their industry and/or major focus.

By partnering with us you have our commitment of:

- ⇒ Access to year- round pre-professionals who are eager to help your business flourish
- ⇒ Access to on-campus interview space
- ⇒ Assisting in the development of an internship program
- ⇒ Providing pre-employment preparation for students
- ⇒ Recognizing internships as an educational strategy integrating classroom learning and progressive work experiences, with a constructive academic relationship between teaching faculty and internship faculty or administrators
- ⇒ Maintaining contact with the employer and the intern during the term to ensure a successful experience
- ⇒ Assisting the student or employer with addressing/resolving issues or disputes that may arise at the internship site

The CPPS office also collaborates with the following:

1. Faculty – To gain an understanding of subject matter, student readiness in regards to career development, and student engagement.
2. Transfer and Career Center – To work collaboratively in preparation and outreach to students in regards to career exploration and preparation and providing information on current and upcoming opportunities.
3. Director of Workforce Development – To review current and upcoming trends in labor market data for placements and industry partnerships.
4. Industry Partners – To find internship and job placements for students, as well as an understanding of their needs and how to better develop students to meet those needs in regards to career readiness.

For additional information please contact us by email or phone:

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# Internships

## What is an Internship?

**Internship:** The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) defines an internship as a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent.

## Criteria for an experience to be defined as an internship:

To ensure that an experience—whether it is a traditional internship or one conducted remotely or virtually—is educational, and thus eligible to be considered a legitimate internship by the NACE definition, all the following criteria must be met:

1. The experience must be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
2. The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.
3. The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description with desired qualifications.
4. There are clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework.
5. There is supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience.
6. There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
7. There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals.

If these criteria are followed, it is the opinion of NACE that the experience can be considered a legitimate internship.

**Micro-Internship:** A short-term, professional project based internship that lasts about 25 to 40 hours.

In considering offering an internship program, we recommend that you maintain realistic expectations regarding the internship experience for your company. The following is a list of things an internship is not:

- ⇒ A guaranteed job offer
- ⇒ Free help
- ⇒ Mainly busy work (filing, covering phone, errands)
- ⇒ An easy grade, the student must be a contributing member of the company
- ⇒ A replacement of a regular employee's position

## **Benefits for your Business**

Offering Internships will allow your business to:

- ⇒ Access a year-round source of qualified and skilled workers
- ⇒ Utilize well-prepared short-term employees while cutting recruiting and training costs
- ⇒ Increase business productivity
- ⇒ Test-drive the talent
- ⇒ Explore new and innovative ideas from student perspectives
- ⇒ Visibility for your company on college campuses
- ⇒ Enhanced connection to the college and the ability to provide input on the quality and relevance of Hartnells' curriculum to reflect industry standards
- ⇒ A positive sense of contribution towards social responsibility of investing in the next generation

## **Benefits for the Students**

An internship can help a student:

- ⇒ Increase confidence and positive self-image through worthwhile on-the-job experience
- ⇒ Build their resume and demonstrate they have hands on experience
- ⇒ Learn necessary skills employers are looking for
- ⇒ Develop a professional network and make industry connections
- ⇒ Gain experience in their major or career field
- ⇒ Understand the relationship between classroom theory and workplace practice
- ⇒ Clarify career goals
- ⇒ Possibly earn a letter of recommendation
- ⇒ Increase opportunity for employment after graduation
- ⇒ Earn academic credit

## **Benefits for the College**

Connecting students to internships can:

- ⇒ Help in the recruitment of new students
- ⇒ Help retain current students
- ⇒ Provide a wider range of learning opportunities for students
- ⇒ Enrich the program's curriculum
- ⇒ Enhance its reputation in the employment community
- ⇒ Enrich partnerships with business and industry
- ⇒ Improve the job placement rate of graduates

# Developing an Internship Program

## Assessing Your Need and Capacity for Internships

Conducting a self-assessment on your needs and expectations is critical to a successful internship program.

Ask the following questions:

- ⇒ How will this add value to the organization and intern?
- ⇒ Do we have time to support an intern? (Supervisor/Mentor)
- ⇒ Do we have resources to support an intern? (workspace, appropriate supplies, computer equipment, safety items, tools etc., to complete the task)
- ⇒ Do we have the capacity to financially compensate an intern? (hourly pay, stipend or mileage reimbursement)
- ⇒ Do we have projects that are beneficial to the organization and/or provide a challenging learning experience for students?
- ⇒ When do we need an intern? (Fall, Spring, Summer)

## Setting Goals and Guidelines

The next step in designing an internship program is to set goals and guidelines for the program. In structuring your internship program, include specific ideas, proposals and logistical information. Be specific as possible. Interns need structure so they don't become lost, confused, or bored. Your plan should be based on your assessment of your needs and capacity.

Below are some questions that may assist you in setting goals and guidelines for your internship program:

- ⇒ ***What do we hope to achieve from the program?***  
Look at current business activities and consider what ongoing work you would like to expand or projects you would like to initiate or complete. Examine your company's recruiting needs (i.e. departments that are expecting growth and/or lacking new employees).
- ⇒ ***What can an intern do for us? Do we want some for a specific project?***  
Analyze what your business needs are and how an intern can help.  
Determine specific projects and/or tasks for the intern that provide a practical extension of the intern's academic courses.  
Determine which tasks are one-time projects with specific tangible deliverables and which are ongoing tasks.  
Make the projects meaningful with a realistic deadline for completion during the internship.
- ⇒ ***Do we want to give the intern a taste of everything the company does?***  
Determine what cross-training is needed, the amount of time devoted to each department, and who their mentor will be in each department.
- ⇒ ***What sort of academic background, experience and technical skill do we want an intern to have?***  
Decide on standards for quality beforehand.  
Determine the level of academic experience and courses the intern should have completed – if any.

## Selecting a Supervisor/Mentor

Each intern should be assigned one direct supervisor/mentor. There are many types of mentors for an intern, but the most important thing for the supervisor/mentor to understand is the importance of the educational experience for the intern. Choose someone with a real interest in being a mentor for your intern (i.e. Project Leader, Department Head, or long-time employee).

### Job Duties of a Supervisor/Mentor:

- ⇒ Complete orientation and training
- ⇒ Introduce intern to staff members
- ⇒ Develop learning objectives
- ⇒ Meet with the intern on a regular basis, provide immediate and actionable feedback and answer general questions related to personal and professional growth
- ⇒ Responsible for the safety and supervision of the student while on site
- ⇒ Evaluate performance and if needs/goals are being met
- ⇒ Correspond with the Career Prep & Placement Services office if the student fails to perform assigned tasks or engages in misconduct

## Creating an Internship/Job Description

Create an internship/job description that clearly explains the intern's duties or project. The job description should align with the goals your company wishes to accomplish with an internship. In return the internship should involve tasks and projects that complement the student's academic programs.

The following can be found in the Resources section:

- ◇ Additional information on Successful Mentorships
- ◇ Internship/job description template

In creating an internship/job posting, consider these essential components:

- ⇒ Organization's goals and mission
- ⇒ Internship type, industry
- ⇒ Note if it's paid or unpaid
- ⇒ Clarify the length of the internship
  - Hours required per week/ semester (fall, spring, summer)
  - Flexibility of hours to accommodate student class schedules
- ⇒ The duties and essential job functions that will be required of the intern
- ⇒ Qualifications (Education level, experience, specific skills, physical requirements, personal characteristics, certifications, licenses)
- ⇒ Preferred majors and/or fields of study
- ⇒ Any training that will be provided
- ⇒ Specify how to apply

## **Paid vs Unpaid**

Internships can be either paid, unpaid or stipend based. Pay for interns varies by location, type of industry, etc. Most employers determine pay based on the students' class level and types of responsibilities. The vast majority of interns working at for-profit organizations must be paid at least the minimum wage and any applicable overtime. Hartnell District recommendation is \$18 per hour.

Paid interns are W-2 employees with the same protections as your other employees, in other words, they are temporary employees treated virtually the same as regular employees with respect to labor law.

Unpaid interns are at risk of being taken advantage of financially. Employers who exhibit a failure to fairly compensate employees for their work are at risk of legal repercussions. The [Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#) provides criteria for what is and is not legal regarding payment for internships.

The primary beneficiary test does not include a rigid set of requirements; instead, it is a non-exhaustive list of factors to determine who is the primary beneficiary of the internship. These factors include:

- ⇒ the extent to which the intern and the employer clearly understand that there is no expectation of compensation;
- ⇒ the extent to which the internship provides training that would be similar to that which would be given in an educational environment, including the clinical and other hands-on training provided by an educational institution;
- ⇒ the extent to which the internship is tied to the intern's formal education program by integrated coursework or the receipt of academic credit;
- ⇒ the extent to which the internship accommodates the intern's academic commitments by corresponding to the academic calendar;
- ⇒ the extent to which the internship's duration is limited to the period in which the internship provides the intern with beneficial learning;
- ⇒ the extent to which the intern's work complements, rather than displaces, the work of paid employees while providing significant educational benefits to the intern; and
- ⇒ the extent to which the intern and the employer understand that the internship is conducted without entitlement to a paid job at the conclusion of the internship.

Whether you can or cannot pay your interns, look at alternative forms of compensation or perks to make your internship stand out, such as:

- ⇒ Professional Development Workshops and Networking Events – Interns can gain new skills and experience by attending events and workshops organized by your company or other entities
- ⇒ Training – Students have limited time with their faculty and in the classroom. Teaching them how to use machines or office processes can be another perk and make them more productive throughout their internship. Provide training to develop skills not offered at college
- ⇒ Transportation – Compensating gas or public transportation costs will make an unpaid internship more budget-neutral.
- ⇒ Scheduling – Flexible schedule and/or minimal hours
- ⇒ Scholarships
- ⇒ Stipend Program
- ⇒ Recognition in newsletter or staff meetings



### **Academic Credit**

Students can receive academic credit for participating in a paid or unpaid internship through **Cooperative Work Experience (CWE)**. CWE integrates a student's academic and career interests with productive work experience. Students gain experience with guidance from a faculty member.

⇒Students may attend classes and work.

⇒Students may attend school full-time one semester, then work full-time the next semester, alternating periods of work and school until their college program is completed.

A learning agreement between the college, student, and employer will be created. It is the responsibility of the student to connect with the career prep and placement services office to receive registration information and complete the proper paperwork to receive credit.

### ***Worker's Compensation***

Paid employees and interns follow the same legal standards under employment law. Paid interns should be covered under workers' compensation. Unpaid interns technically do not need to be covered by workers' compensation but there is a risk to an employer should an incident/injury happen. This is a good reason to discuss academic credit for unpaid interns, since this will move the burden of workers' compensation on the educational institution.

Employers working with interns are encouraged to be aware of their workers' compensation benefits responsibility and consult with their Human Resources Department and/or workers' compensation carrier.

# Recruiting an Intern

Begin recruiting early! Students begin registering for courses as early as two to three months prior to the next semester, as well as making commitments to part-time jobs. By starting early, you increase your chances of receiving the highest number of applications and finding the best person for the position.

Once you have created a position description for the internship there are several ways to market the opportunity to students. All you need to do is email it to [CareerServices@hartnell.edu](mailto:CareerServices@hartnell.edu).

Once we have an intern request (within 1-3 days)

- ⇒ an announcement is sent out to our current cohort of students
- ⇒ our faculty are contacted and requested to send any names forward of candidates who meet the specified qualifications
- ⇒ an extract of students who meet the specified academic qualifications are pulled and contacted directly

After an agreed set time frame, cover letters and/or resumes will be forwarded to your company contact.

## Selecting the Right Intern

Carefully review resumes and look for candidates with the appropriate experience, professionalism, and transferable skills that you are looking for. Remember that internships are sometimes a student's first professional experience. For this reason, you must search for evidence of skills using other strategies.

### *Campus Involvement*

Students who have taken the time to get involved in campus organizations and activities usually have developed strong time management and organization skills, as well as the ability to work within teams and groups. A resume that highlights a great deal of campus involvement is also a great indicator of a student's pride and loyalty to their institution; the same way an employee is invested in a company.

### *Academic Performance and Coursework*

A high grade point average (GPA) does not always indicate a good internship candidate, but it does show that the student finds value in knowledge and education. A GPA is a good indicator of a student's work ethic and organization. Depending on how many relevant classes a student has completed can show theory that they are familiar with.

### *Prior Work Experience*

Most students applying for internships do not have resumes full of professional work experience. However, the jobs a student has held can tell you a little something about his/her work ethic, dedication and professional skill-set. Working any type of job requires punctuality and personal responsibility – two qualities all employers want in an intern. Look beyond the job title and think about what skills and knowledge the student must possess to succeed in an environment. Look for what transferable skills they have developed that can be beneficial in your internship.

## **Interviewing**

The Career Prep & Placement Services office can assist with organizing interviews and also provide on campus interview space.

Since students generally lack professional experience, internship interview questions should focus on goals and determine if the intern is truly motivated.

State and federal laws have been established to prohibit discrimination in the workplace and the hiring process. The process used for hiring interns must also comply with all employment regulations.

### **Sample Interview Questions**

*Focus on the student's future goals in place of professional experience:*

- ⇒ How do you think this internship experience will prepare you for your career?
- ⇒ Why do you want to intern for this organization?
- ⇒ What are your plans after graduation?
- ⇒ Where do you see yourself in five years?

*Inquire about academic experience rather than professional:*

- ⇒ How/Why did you choose your major?
- ⇒ How do you feel your education has prepared you for this internship?

*Questions to determine the candidate's work ethic:*

- ⇒ Why do you think you will be successful in your chosen field?
- ⇒ Give me an example of a time when you worked on a project successfully with minimal supervision.
- ⇒ Tell me about a time when you made a mistake and describe how you solved the situation.

*Questions to identify the student's interpersonal, analytical and problem-solving skills:*

- ⇒ How do you handle projects with short deadlines that require precise calculations and analysis?  
What is your approach?
- ⇒ Tell me about the most recent project you worked on. What were your responsibilities?
- ⇒ Describe a situation where there seems to be no way to complete a project and yet you found a way.  
What happened?
- ⇒ Do you work well with a team?

# Hiring and Managing an Intern

## Notification of Internship Candidate Selection

Once you have selected a candidate for the internship, it is important to notify them and also notify the candidates who did not get selected. You will want to do this as soon as possible since students may have applied to multiple internships.

When creating an offer letter for the internship, you should include the following:

- ⇒ Position title
- ⇒ Start/End Dates of internship
- ⇒ Employment Location/Department
- ⇒ Supervisor/mentor information
- ⇒ Number of work hours per week
- ⇒ Compensation information
- ⇒ Information pertaining to the first day of internship

Samples of the following can be found in the Resources section:

- ◇ Offer Agreement
- ◇ Rejection Letter/Email on resume and interview
- ◇ Orientation Checklist

## Onboarding and Orientation

It is very important that interns be welcomed just as you would new full-time employees. Provide an orientation and familiarize the intern with the in's and out's of your organization, help them acclimate to their new work environment and clarify expectations from the start.

*Prior to the start of the internship:*

- ⇒ Establish and agree upon the start date (where and when to report), end date and work hours/schedule.
- ⇒ Set up an organized workspace for the intern as well as any other resources necessary for the intern to fulfill the responsibilities discussed like computer, email account, telephone extension, general office supplies, etc.
- ⇒ Establish expectations regarding the organizational dress code, on-site social media usage and parking.
- ⇒ Review and outline employer expectations, work expectations and description of internship duties.
- ⇒ Review and discuss the mission of the organization and how the intern fits into that role.
- ⇒ Inform the intern if there is a need for a background check, fingerprinting and/or a health screening test.

*Within the first week of the internship*

- ⇒ Provide an orientation that includes:
  - A site tour
  - Introduction to staff relevant to the interns' experiential learning activities
  - Review of characteristics of and risks associated with the facility's operations, services and/or clients.
  - Discussion of safety policies and emergency procedures
  - Detail where the student will check-in and how they log their time.
- ⇒ Provide the intern with a written description of their tasks and responsibilities and further discuss the position description and specific task/project details.
- ⇒ Provide appropriate training, equipment, materials and work area for intern to perform assigned tasks.

## Managing your Intern

At the start of the internship develop work objectives/projects. These objectives serve as the academic and professional roadmap for the intern's semester/time with your organization. This process helps to clearly identify the intern's learning objectives and how the intern plans to accomplish them. This is also a good time to discuss work place requirements, intern responsibilities, and other expectations.

This should all be included in an internship placement agreement which can also include additional agreements such as a media release and/or confidentiality agreements.

## Handling Difficult Situations

This internship experience may be the first work experience and life experience a student has in a work environment. Some may need extra coaching about appropriate workplace behaviors. For instance, what if an intern curses, deals poorly with conflict, is disrespectful to a fellow employee; or they dress inappropriately? If an intern displays any of these behaviors, of course you must intervene. In some cases, we understand that a company does not have time to deal with these types of situations. The staff at the CPPS office is available to meet with the intern to go over proper behavior and work on additional soft skills the intern may need.

The CPPS office is a resource for you. We can have those sometimes difficult conversations. Our staff can go over expectations and workplace rules and breakdown what they really mean for a intern. For example, in some cases there are no official dress codes, but a company may still have expectations on how an intern dresses.

Interventions are a great way to not only explain to the intern what is inappropriate about the behavior, but to also help them develop new, productive life skills.

The following can be found in the Resources section:

- ◇ Tips for Writing Learning Objectives
- ◇ Sample Work Objective/Projects Template
- ◇ Internships Placement Agreement

# The Stages of an Internship

**Adapted from: Sweitzer, H.F. & King, M.A. (1999). The Successful Internship: Transformation & Empowerment**

Some of the concerns and challenges interns face seem to occur in a predictable order. Each stage has its own obstacles and opportunities. There are concerns interns will have at each stage, and to some extent, those concerns must be resolved for them to move forward and continue learning and growing. However, the process resolving the concerns is also a learning experience in and of itself. At each stage, there are important tasks that will help interns address the concerns. If these tasks go undone and the concerns are left unresolved, the intern can become stuck in stage.

Rate of progress through the stages is affected by many factors, including the number of hours spent at the agency; previous internships or field experiences; your personality; the personal issues and levels of support you bring into the experience; the style of supervision and the nature of work. The more you understand as a supervisor, the better the learning experience for the intern.

## Anticipation

- ⇒ Beginning of internship
- ⇒ Anxiety- “What if” ... Interaction with many people
- ⇒ Level Task accomplishment low
- ⇒ Definition of specific goals with consideration of skills needed to complete established goals
- ⇒ Assumptions- need to examine and critique
- ⇒ Development of good relationships with supervisor, co-workers, etc.

## Disillusionment

- ⇒ Gap between expectations for the internship and what is actually occurring
- ⇒ Sometimes gaps are small, others large
- ⇒ “What if...” from previous stage has become “What’s Wrong”
- ⇒ Possibility for tremendous personal and professional growth by working through problems

## Confrontation

- ⇒ To get past the Disillusionment stage intern must face and study what is happening
- ⇒ Failure to acknowledge and discuss problems can diminish learning experience, performance, etc.
- ⇒ May need to reevaluate goals- may be unrealistic or opportunities may have changed
- ⇒ As issues raised in disillusionment are resolved, task and morale accomplishments will raise
- ⇒ Must continue to confront and not get “frozen in the moment”
- ⇒ Empowerment from knowing can grapple with problems effectively

## Competence

- ⇒ Morale high- trust in yourself
- ⇒ Transition into “professional” from “apprentice”
- ⇒ Good platform to demand more from self and assignment increase workload, responsibility

## Culmination

- ⇒ May face a variety of feelings at this stage
- ⇒ Pride in accomplishments, sadness in leaving
- ⇒ Need to address emotions, find avenue to express them

# Continuous Improvement Process

## The Importance of Evaluations

Evaluating the internship program on a regular basis will help you connect more effectively with students and provide the best opportunities for discovering future talent. In addition, evaluations provide valuable feedback that can help facilitate continuous improvement of the program.

## Evaluating the Intern's Progress

An internship can only be a true learning experience if constructive feedback is provided. Supervisors/Mentors should provide periodic formal and informal feedback and evaluations of the intern.

During an effective evaluation an intern may:

- ⇒ Review initial learning objectives and report if progress is being made
- ⇒ Learn how their work is contributing to the organization
- ⇒ Participate in evaluating their strengths
- ⇒ Discuss areas needing growth and development
- ⇒ Review tasks and assignments and clarification of expectations
- ⇒ Provide feedback on experience

The following can be found in the Resources section:

- ◇ Employer Evaluation Forms
- ◇ Sample Student Evaluation
- ◇ Sample Student Evaluation of Internship Program
- ◇ Sample Exit Interview

## Exit Interview

Through a formal exit interview, you can determine if interns had a good experience at your company and provide valuable feedback to managers for program planning in the future.

Schedule the exit interview in advance and avoid scheduling on the intern's last day to leave time to take care of any action items that come up.

## Exit Interview Steps

- ⇒ Explain the purpose of the exit interview
- ⇒ Encourage the intern to be as candid as possible
- ⇒ Ask the intern if they have any remaining questions or suggestions for improving the internship program
- ⇒ Receive back company property such as building access card, keys, parking passes, safety or work equipment
- ⇒ Conclude by thanking the intern for their time and honesty

# Culmination of Internship

## Conclusion of the Internship

This doesn't have to be the end. If you stumbled on a great candidate, don't forget to keep in contact with them in case a position becomes available. In most cases interns are looking for full time jobs a full year before graduation. You can also consider writing your intern a recommendation letter for future internships and/or employment. Remember you can also use the information gathered from evaluations to publicize the success of your internship program to management and to potential interns.