

Employer Guide: Developing a Quality Internship Program

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Introduction

This guide is designed to assist in the process of developing an internship at your organization and seeks to answer frequently asked questions regarding internships for ASU students. In an effort to provide the best opportunities to ASU students and alumni, Career and Professional Development Services (CPDS) works with employers to create and maintain quality internship programs that meet the general internship qualifications at Arizona State University. Together, it is our goal that all internships provide a mutually beneficial experience to students and alumni as well as our employer partners.

Section one

Getting started - The goal of an internship is to allow students to:

- implement classroom knowledge into a professional work environment
- understand multiple aspects of an organization
- acquire industry knowledge
- develop career competencies that will be critical to advancing in their future careers

These guidelines have been established to assist our employer partners with developing meaningful internship programs.

One of the biggest mistakes employers make is hiring an intern before they are ready. Before you start seeking to hire an intern, consider the following questions:

Questions to consider before hiring an intern
What is your goal in creating an internship program at your organization?
What is the intended duration of the internship and how many hours per week will the intern work?
Will the internship be virtual or in-person? If virtual, what methods of communication are established for the intern.
How will you compensate the intern for their time? If unpaid, does your internship satisfy all requirements of the FLSA for unpaid internships?
What orientation, training and resources will be provided to set the intern up for success?
Do you have an individual who has been identified as a supervisor or mentor for the intern who has direct knowledge and experience in the intern's duties? If so, does this person have the time and resources to commit to training and mentoring the intern for the duration of the internship?

What is an internship according to ASU?

An internship is more than a part-time job or volunteer position, but rather a short-term, hands-on, supervised work experience with a professional organization that is designed to increase a student's knowledge of a professional career field through significant learning objectives. The experience must be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides opportunities for applying classroom concepts in the workplace setting. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer and cannot be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.

Generally, the outlined criteria below must be met to qualify as a professional internship:
The intern will receive quality training by a supervisor/mentor who possesses expertise directly related to the intern's responsibilities.
The experience will provide exposure to multiple aspects of a professional career field, internship organization, or industry.
A job description will be provided that includes a detailed explanation of duties and/or projects, required skills or qualifications, minimum number of hours per week.
Clerical or nonprofessional tasks will comprise no more than 20% of the intern's responsibilities.
The intern will be provided with an appropriate work space and resources required to complete assignments. If the internship is virtual, the intern must be provided the resources to complete assignments.

Section two

Things to consider: Paid vs. unpaid internships

It is a common misconception that the majority of internships are unpaid. In order to be competitive, we suggest paying your interns. Of course, this can vary by industry and level of skill needed for the position. For more technical internships that require high level of skill, interns may even be compensated up to \$25 an hour. Generally, at ASU the rate of pay needs to be at least federal, state, or local minimum wage (calculated over any time scale - hourly, weekly, semi-monthly, monthly or annually).

Courts have used the "primary beneficiary test" to determine whether an intern or student is, in fact, an employee under the FLSA.² In short, this test allows courts to examine the "economic reality" of the intern-employer relationship to determine which party is the "primary beneficiary" of the relationship. Courts have identified the following seven factors as part of the test:

FLSA Requirements for unpaid internships

The extent to which the intern and the employer clearly understand that there is no expectation of compensation. Any promise of compensation, express or implied, suggests that the intern is an employee—and vice versa.

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 educational institutions.

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.

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.

Source: <https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.htm>

Generally, a for-profit institution would not meet the requirements of the U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), unless the internship is structured more as a “job shadow” experience. The employer must not gain any immediate advantage from the unpaid work of the intern.

Can I offer an internship for credit?

ASU has over 400 degree programs, some requiring internships and some not. It is up to the student to work with their academic advisors to determine if an internship experience is eligible for credit for their degree program. Employers who offer internships to students and the student is getting credit for the experience must sign a Student Placement Agreement outlining the internship and includes terms of the agreement. Because of this, it is advisable that employers not guarantee internship credit for their positions, as this is determined by the academic advisors of the student's major.

International student considerations

Arizona State University (ASU) is home to more than 10,000 international students representing over 135 different countries. This makes ASU the #1 public university for international students in the United States and it means that your organization can quickly access global talent to meet your business needs.

The most common visa type employers will see when recruiting international students for internships is the F-1 visa. International students holding this visa are eligible to work in any unpaid internship if the internship qualifies as a trainee experience by [FLSA standards](#). To become eligible to work in a paid internship, international students must apply for one of the following types of work authorization listed below and there are different processing times associated with application. Please note that as an employer, you have minimal paperwork to complete and there is no greater financial commitment to hire an international student for an internship than a domestic student for an internship.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a type of off-campus employment authorization for F-1 students who must complete an internship course in order to graduate from their current degree program. Detailed information is available through [ASU's International Student and Scholars Center \(ISSC\)](#) who have a processing time of CPT applications between 10-14 business days.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) allowing international students in F-1 status to gain off-campus work experience in their field of study before or after completion of studies for a maximum of 12 months. F-1 students who received a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree in a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering or Math) field may apply for a single 24-month extension of their 12-month OPT period. The purpose of OPT is to complement the student's academic work. USCIS processing time is approximately 90 days for all OPT applications after which students receive their Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) which states the dates the student is eligible to work in the United States. Detailed information is available through [ASU's International Student and Scholar Center](#).

For more information on these and other legal issues from the [National Association of Colleges and Employers \(NACE\)](#). Also refer to the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' \(USCIS\)](#).

Section three

Creating and implementing your program

Robust internship descriptions reach students more effectively than brief ones. This template includes information you need to create a highly attractive opportunity to students and alumni.

Internship description template

Position Description and Overview

This is an opportunity to attract the right student and identify who they will report to for the duration of the internship.

Learning Objectives

Effective learning objectives learn action verbs to describe what you want the student to be able to do by the end of the internship.

Primary Responsibilities

The core duties which will be completed.

Minimum Qualifications

The required skills and experience.

Desired Qualifications

The preferred skills and experience.

Start and End Date

Internships have clearly defined start and end dates.

Hours per Week

Desired hours per week depending on organizational need.

Unpaid or paid?

Identifying paid status in the job description helps attract the right

Location and Logistics

Identifying city and state resources provided for on-site internships or logistics surrounding virtual internships including technical and computer requirements.

Implementing a successful internship program

Orientation:

- Provide a thorough onboarding and orientation process for your interns. Make sure all expectations and goals are clearly established at the beginning of the internship.
- Educate the intern about policies/procedures and how your organization operates to set them up for success in their new role.
- Introduce the intern to their mentor and the team they will be working with. Communicate to the team the responsibilities of the intern in order to facilitate success for all.

Supervision:

- Maintain an open channel of communication with the intern. Not every intern will need the same type of support and supervision. It's important to ask the intern what motivates them and how they prefer to be recognized and receive feedback.
- Be flexible with the intern's schedule and needs. Remembering interns are still students who may be taking courses during the day or evenings, holding other jobs on the weekend or have family needs they must tend to.

Professional Development:

- Provide professional development opportunities for the interns, including participation in trainings, workshops and meetings that help them learn about the industry and profession.
- Provide opportunities for the intern to network and conduct informational interviews with other members of the organization.

After the internship:

- Complete a final evaluation and facilitate a formalized exit interview process. This allows interns to provide feedback in order to assess the effectiveness of the program and provides you an opportunity to make changes that will enhance the experience for future interns.
- If you are willing to be a reference for the intern, provide contact information. Consider connecting with them on LinkedIn for additional professional networking opportunities.
- Complete a final evaluation for the intern.
- Provide copies or files that link the projects they worked on so that they continue to build their work portfolio.

Section four

Recruiting students for your internship program

When the internship program is finalized, the next step is to register and post the position to Handshake. Handshake is ASU's online career platform that you can use to post job or internship opportunities, view and register for upcoming events, schedule on-campus recruiting visits and connect directly with students. You will need to register for a Handshake account first, and then request to connect with ASU. To do this, visit app.joinhandshake.com/register and choose Employers.

This website is accessible to students of all majors and degree programs as well as alumni who may be seeking career and internship opportunities. Students will view and apply to the position per your directions on the posting. All interviewing, hiring and onboarding is conducted between you and the student.

Beyond Handshake, resources are available to connect directly with the student or alumni population you are looking for. For assistance with creating an on-campus recruiting strategy, contact the Recruiting Services and Employer Relations Team.

Conclusion

ASU values our employers and the role you play in developing our students. Thank you for your valuable contributions, time, and efforts. This guide was prepared by Career and Professional Development Services to provide our employer partners with internship development and implementation strategies. It is our goal that both ASU students and employers have a positive internship experience that aids in student's career development and provides employers satisfaction with the experience.

For additional assistance in creating and implementing an internship within your organization, please contact the Recruiting Services and Employer Relations team.

Helpful Links

FLSA Standards: bit.ly/flsastandards

ASU's International Student and Scholars Center (ISSC): bit.ly/ISSC

National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE): naceweb.org

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS): bit.ly/uscitizenimmigration

Handshake app.joinhandshake.com/register

Recruiting Services and Employer Relations Team: employers.careerservices@asu.edu