



# Internship Program Guide

## PLANNING YOUR INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

### Identifying an Internship Coordinator/Supervisor

The first step is finding someone in your organization who will be the “point person” for your internship program. At the very least, this person will be in charge of the intern once they are hired and integrated into the team. Ideally, this person will also be involved in the planning, recruiting, and hiring processes as well.

### Assessing internal needs

A common mistake that companies make is knowing they need help, but not having a clear idea of where exactly that help could be used. If you don't have a clear idea of what you want the intern to work on, then you run the risk of having a directionless internship program.

Think about the following questions to identify some specific areas where interns might be helpful:

1. What are some ongoing tasks in my department or organization?
2. What is the workload of our department or organization?
3. What projects are currently on the “back burner”?

### Defining Learning Objectives

Once you identify where you could use the most help in your organization, it is time to define learning objectives for your internship program. Some organizations have static internships (where the student stays in one department/area), and others have rotating internships (where the student moves between different departments/areas). Regardless of which you choose, learning objectives are an essential part of a successful internship program.

Learning Objectives help the organization and the student to have common expectations for the experience. They also help both parties connect what the intern is getting out of the experience to their coursework. While flexibility in internship programs is important, it is also important to have a way to assess expectations and progress for both the intern and the organization.

# STARTING YOUR INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

## Creating your internship job description

Must include:

- Mission/description of the organization
- Description of the internship and any potential projects
- Projected start and end dates of the internship
- Learning objectives
- Required skills and qualifications

Tips for writing an effective description:

- Keep it simple and easy to scan
- Use keywords that attract students
- Specify if paid or unpaid, and provide details if paid

See our sample description [here](#).

## Hiring your intern

Once you've decided who will supervise the intern, what they will work on, defined learning objectives, and developed a description, it is now time to hire your intern.

See our recruiting opportunities and suggestions [here](#).

## Onboarding your intern

Just as you would with a full time employee, it's important to make your intern feel welcomed and acclimated to their new organization. It's not uncommon for internships to be students' first professional experience, so they might not be familiar with the expectations, environment, and processes. An effective orientation can help to set up your interns and organization for success. Here are some things to include:

- Mission, vision, and policies of your company (un/written and un/spoken)
- Hours (when to arrive/leave, how many hours expected per week)
- Dress code
- Overall responsibilities
- Communications expectations (how best to contact who and when)
- Absenteeism/tardiness and how the organization handles this
- Safety regulations/requirements

## Running your internship program

### Supervisor Meetings:

We recommend at least biweekly, 1:1 meetings between the intern and their supervisor. This way there is regular contact and if issues arise, they can be resolved quickly.

### Feedback Meetings:

It is common to have two feedback meetings interns: one at the mid-point of the program, and one at the end. These meetings should be designed to give the student genuine, honest feedback on their performance and provide recommendations to them on how they could improve.

## Ending the program

### Exit Survey:

At the end of the program, give the intern an exit survey so that you can learn from their experiences. What worked well in your program? Where did the intern struggle? Was there anything you or your organization could have done differently? Taking these answers into account will help you to continually refine and improve your program.

### Reviews:

If the student had a positive experience, ask them to write you a review on Handshake to attract other students to apply to future opportunities. You can also offer the student a review, either in the form of a recommendation letter or a recommendation on their LinkedIn profile.