

Internship Guide

Washburn University Career Services
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What is an internship?

The term **internship** can be used to describe any temporary career-related experience. These on-the-job learning opportunities may also be called experiential education or co-ops (cooperative education). Tasks completed by interns vary widely depending on the organization and career field.

What are the benefits of completing an internship?

Explore career fields While many students wait until their junior or senior year to complete an internship, completing an internship while you are still undecided allows you to explore career paths before you commit to a major. Juniors and seniors can use an internship to experience the variety of specialties within their chosen field and determine the best fit for individual skills, abilities and interests.

Gain work experience Employers frequently cite the work experience gained by internships as important in their hiring decisions for college graduates. An internship is a great way to gain experience in your career field and can help to put you ahead of other candidates in the job search.

Learn valuable job search skills The process for finding an internship is, in many cases, identical to finding full-time employment. Finding job openings, contacting employers, developing your resume and cover letter, and interviewing are all skills that you will practice during your internship search.

Build a network of individuals in your field An internship will put you in contact with professionals in your field of interest - a perfect networking opportunity.

Observe and develop skills required to succeed in any professional workplace The best way to learn how to work in a professional environment is through practice. An internship is your orientation to the world of work!

May even get a job offer! Employers like to hire interns into full-time positions after graduation. During an internship, employers are able to observe your daily behavior, work ethic, and ability to fit in with their organization. Think of an internship as an extended interview.

What types of internships are available?

Internships are often categorized based on three main criteria: compensation, college credit, and time-frame.

Internships can be either **paid** or **unpaid** depending on the career field and employer resources. Internships in business fields (accounting, marketing, finance) are more likely to be paid than those in social science careers (social work, education, history). Consider whether or not your personal financial situation will allow you to accept an unpaid internship. An unpaid position can be a great experience and has the same networking opportunities and professional benefits of a paid internship. When considering an unpaid position, it is important to weigh the long-term benefit of your experience against the short-term financial gain.

If you will receive **college credit** for your internship you need to contact your academic department to arrange this. Internships that are for college credit may require you to enroll in an internship course and have a faculty advisor. Each department handles internship credit differently so be sure to check with your advisor before accepting or beginning an internship. Internships for which you do not receive college credit are still valuable experiences.

The length of internships varies, however students commonly complete internships over the **summer or during a semester** while taking classes. Summer internships are more frequently full-time, while internships completed during the semester tend to be fewer hours per week to allow students to continue to take classes. In the early stages of your internship search, consider which option fits into your schedule. Location of an internship also is a factor; summer internships can be found nationwide or internationally, while semester internships may have to be local.

During your internship search you may run across the term **co-op**. A co-op, or cooperative education, experience is typically a semester of full-time employment. Students in a traditional co-op setting do not take college courses during the co-op. Employers may use the term internship and co-op interchangeably so be sure to ask about the employment time-frame and expectations.

How do I find an internship?

Clarify Your Goals When conducting an internship search, many students go straight to job postings and skip this critical step. Your internship is only as valuable as the time, thought and effort you put in to your experience. Before beginning your internship search, think about what you want to gain from your experience. A meaningful choice of an internship is going to be far more beneficial to your future career.

Questions to consider

Goals:

- Do I want to explore an unknown career field? Select a major?
- Gain experience within my chosen field?
- What types of projects would I like to be involved in?
- What skills would I like to develop?

Logistics:

- Do I need a local internship? Can I accept an internship in another state or country?
- When would be the best time for me to complete an internship?
- Can I accept an unpaid position?
- Do I want to receive credit towards graduation? Does my major require an internship?

Research/Find Positions The process of finding an internship is the same process you will use to find a full-time position after graduation. Begin by researching companies or looking through position postings to find opportunities. Narrowing your search based on the answers to the above questions will be helpful.

Places to Search:

BodJobs is a job and internship search site specifically for Washburn students! Your free account allows you to search through internship and full-time or part-time job postings. BodJobs also allows you to upload your resume, apply for positions, search the Employer Database, sign up for on-campus interviews and learn about upcoming Career Services events.

Internships.com is a great resource for your internship search. Internships.com is an internship posting site that includes the ability to search by major/interest area, compensation type, and location (includes all regions of the United States and international listings). Access to Internships.com is free for any Washburn student. Instructions on how to access Internships.com are located in the Resource Library section of the BodJobs homepage. You will need to create a BodJobs account before you can use Internships.com. Many up-to-date internships are listed so be sure to check out this valuable tool!

Academic Department Your academic department may have information about internships available for your major. Check with your department advisor to see what resources are available.

Career Fairs are a great way to meet with potential internship employers. WU Career Services organizes the *Career and Graduate School Fair* every September and the *Career Fair* each February. Both events are held in Lee Arena and are open to all students, alumni, and community members. Prior to each event, a list of employers can be found at www.washburn.edu/services/career. Information on other career fairs can also be found here.

Before attending a career fair, update and polish your resume and research the companies attending. Target a few that interest you and prepare questions specific to that employer. Be sure to know your internships goals and what you have to offer an employer.

Professional organizations frequently have student chapters or lower student membership fees. Joining an organization can provide networking opportunities and allow you to attend conferences in your area of interest. Organizations may have their own job search sites where you can look for internship opportunities.

Creating your own internship Not finding the type of experience you are seeking? Have the perfect experience with the ideal company in mind? Consider approaching an organization about creating your own internship. While these internships are less likely to be paid, creating your own internship can be a very rewarding experience. The key to creating your own internship is to target a specific organization and how your skills and experience can assist the employer. Try approaching smaller, local organizations with your resume and several ideas on how you can benefit the organization. Larger organizations often have a formal internship program already in place, but smaller organizations offer more flexibility to create new internships.

What is the application and selection process for internships?

The application and interview process for internships is the same you will use when seeking a full-time position. Career Services in Morgan 123 has information on each of these topics and is available to assist with each step.

Begin applying for internships early If you are planning to complete a summer internship, begin your search over winter break or earlier! Many internship programs have strict application deadlines; with an early start and an organized search you can avoid missing important dates.

Resume /Cover Letter The resume and cover letter are your opportunity to introduce yourself to an employer and demonstrate how your skills and experiences would benefit the organization. Many candidates make the mistake of creating one resume and cover letter to use with all job applications and assuming that the employer will understand why they are a good fit for the position. Instead tailor your resume and cover letter to each position you apply for. Pay close attention to the job description and focus on how your skills and experiences match the requirements of the position. Listing related coursework can help you demonstrate your knowledge and experience gained through your college classes.

Interview The purpose of the resume is to secure an interview, and the purpose of your interview is to discover whether you and the employer are a match. Try not to think about the interview as a one-way selection process. Instead, focus on whether the employer and the position are a good fit for your internship goals. Many organizations conduct interviews on campus for internship positions.

Call 670-1450 to schedule a mock interview. Participating in a mock interview can greatly improve your interview skills.

Select/Accept After finding, applying and interviewing for several positions, you will have an idea about which opportunities would be a good fit for your internship and career goals. Carefully consider your options and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each offer. Once you have accepted an internship, be sure to withdraw your application from all other organizations.

Keys to a successful internship experience

Each employer has its own definition of internship so be sure to **ask lots of questions** during the selection process to ensure that the experience is what you are seeking. Your accomplishments and tasks completed during your internship are more important than simply having the word “intern” on your resume.

At the start of your internship, meet with your supervisor to discuss your interest areas and **internship goals**. While you will not be able to tailor your entire experience, showing initiative and ownership of your experience will demonstrate professionalism and dedication to the position. Make your specific areas of interest and experience known to your internship supervisor.

Treat your internship as a job interview. Since many employers hire full-time employees from recent interns, your performance during the internship can determine whether or not you are offered a position. During your internship, act as you would if you were a full-time employee. Following the dress code, arriving on time, staying on task and completing work within deadlines will impress your supervisor. Even if your company does not have a position open, a positive reference from your internship will be very helpful during your job search.

You only get one chance to make a positive first impression on a potential employer!

Visit Career Services in Morgan 123 or call 670-1450 to make an appointment.

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