

SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

INTERNSHIP HIRING GUIDE



What is an internship?

An internship is an extension of a student's education and therefore is most importantly a learning opportunity. Through internships, students are able to go outside the classroom to experience real-world learning in a professional work environment. Internships can add a great deal of value to students' career exploration and development, and ideally provide meaningful professional experience in their chosen fields.

Students typically seek an internship related to their major. The work performed during an internship should be highly educational, closely supervised, include learning objectives, and reinforce a student's academic training.

Internships can be paid or unpaid. Either way, students may choose to pursue academic credit for their internship experiences, though that is not required by Southern Oregon University. Internships taken for academic credit must be sponsored by a faculty member, preferably in the student's major.

Why hire an intern from Southern Oregon University?

As Oregon's university for the future, SOU is committed to academic rigor, innovative teaching practices, and community involvement. We attract students that are bright, motivated, and engaged – exactly the kind of individuals that employers want. Inviting an SOU student to join your team as an intern offers a variety of benefits:

- Year round source of highly motivated pre-professionals
- Effective way to recruit and evaluate potential employees
- New perspectives on old problems
- Improve the capacity of your current professional staff
- Increased visibility of your organization on campus
- Opportunity to impact the next generation of professionals in your field

How many hours do students typically work?

Students seeking academic credit for their internships must work at least 30 hours for every one credit earned. Most students enroll for three or four credit hours, meaning that they would work from 90 to 120 hours over the course of a ten week term, which is up to 12 hours per week. Total hours can vary greatly from student to student and across academic majors, however, so employers should discuss expectations directly with potential interns during the selection process.

If a student is not seeking academic credit, then there is no minimum number of hours required each week. The student and employer should work together, however, to ensure that enough hours are being offered to achieve the student's learning objectives.

When do students typically do internships?

Depending upon the needs and preferences of everyone involved, internships may begin and end at any time that is mutually agreed upon by the employer, the student, and – if credit is being sought – the relevant academic department. That being said, most students completing their internships for credit align their internships with one or more academic quarters.

- Fall Quarter: Late September through mid-December
- Winter Quarter: Early January through mid-March
- Spring Quarter: Late March through early June
- Summer Quarter: Mid-June through late September

Ideally, students apply for internships the quarter before they begin, if not sooner. Some students, though, might still be looking for internships as the quarter begins and will hope to begin working immediately after being hired.

What are the student's responsibilities?

Students are expected to apply for an internship just as if they were applying for an actual job. They should supply a resume and ideally a cover letter, and they can submit other documents (like unofficial transcripts or writing samples) if requested by the employer. They are expected to arrive to the work site on-time based on a predetermined schedule and to perform to the best of their ability. Whether the internship is paid or not, students are expected to display the utmost professionalism and to communicate to the employer if they feel the internship goals are not being met for any reason. Students must establish specific goals for their internship at the beginning of the term and will report on their ability to meet those goals by the end of the term.

If the students are receiving academic credit for the internship, then they might be required by an SOU faculty member to obtain some or all of the following things from their internship supervisor:

- [Work Site Agreement](#)
- [Agreement of Work/Learning Objectives](#)
- [Midterm and/or Final Evaluations](#)
- Final Verified Time Sheet

Even if the student is not receiving academic credit, establishing work/learning objectives and performing formal evaluations is highly recommended in order to make the experience as beneficial as possible for the intern and the employer.

The evaluation of the student is an important part of the learning process. Candid, constructive, and immediate performance feedback is an important part of the student's professional development. We greatly appreciate your involvement in the learning process.

What are the employer's responsibilities?

The employer provides opportunities to apply theory to everyday organizational and industry challenges, to further develop skills, and to network with professionals in the industry. The employer is expected to spend sufficient time supervising the student to ensure that the objectives of the internship agreement are met. The supervisor is expected to periodically evaluate the student and to communicate with a faculty internship coordinator when appropriate.

It has been established that students who are earning academic credit are NOT employees of the university. Southern Oregon University is prohibited from accepting any liability for the acts, omissions, and conduct of the students and is prohibited from providing coverage with State Accident Insurance, liability insurance, or workers' compensation insurance. Because this is a legal issue, no definitive answer can be provided; however, prudence would argue that the employer should at least provide workers' compensation coverage for its interns.

It is important to keep in mind that hosting interns is a time-consuming prospect. Someone at the organization must be able to supervise and mentor the students, answer their questions, teach them about the field of work, and possibly complete paperwork required by the University. This can actually hinder an employer's own workflow at times. Despite the extra time, energy, and resources that may be needed, however, employers almost always report that hosting an internship is a positive and beneficial experience.

Do interns get paid?

Even if a student is earning college credit for an internship, the student is still permitted to be compensated. Paid interns make ideal workers – hungry to learn, eager to make a good impression, and willing to perform a multitude of tasks. Remember, many of our students are financially supporting themselves and possibly their families. By paying them, you allow them to spend more of their time and effort on the internship and less on finding other ways to pay for tuition, room and board, transportation, and other expenses. The relatively small amount of

money employers spend on intern wages is generally a good investment, particularly given the resulting increase in the size and quality of the candidate pool for paid versus unpaid internships.

If you are unable to pay your intern, it is still possible to offer them an outstanding experience. It is important to note, though, that unpaid internship experiences are subject to guidelines imposed by the Department of Labor, which mandates that the primary beneficiary of an unpaid internship be the student. Courts have used the “primary beneficiary test” whether the intern is indeed the primary beneficiary of the internship experience. The following seven factors are the most important components of that test:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. The extent to which the internship is tied to the intern’s formal education program by integrated coursework or the receipt of academic credit.
4. The extent to which the internship accommodates the intern’s academic commitments by corresponding to the academic calendar.
5. The extent to which the internship’s duration is limited to the period in which the internship provides the intern with beneficial learning.
6. 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.
7. 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.

Per the Department of Labor’s Fact Sheet #71, “Courts have described the ‘primary beneficiary test’ as a flexible test, and no single factor is determinative. Accordingly, whether an intern or student is an employee under the FLSA necessarily depends on the unique circumstances of each case. If analysis of these circumstances reveals that an intern or student is actually an employee, then he or she is entitled to both minimum wage and overtime pay under the FLSA. On the other hand, if the analysis confirms that the intern or student is not an employee, then he or she is not entitled to either minimum wage or overtime pay under the FLSA.”

(2018, January). *Fact sheet #71: Internship programs under the fair labor standards act*. Retrieved from <https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.htm>

How does an employer post an internship opportunity?

Employers should post internship and job opportunities using SOU's Handshake system by visiting <https://app.joinhandshake.com/login>. You can set up an employer account if you have not used the system before, which is very fast, free, and easy to do. After your new account is approved, you will be able to manage your own postings. If you have difficulties using the Handshake system, visit the Help Center at <https://support.joinhandshake.com/hc>, or contact Max Brooks at brooksm@sou.edu.

What are the components of a successful and appealing internship program?

To attract great interns and ensure a successful experience for everyone, be sure to consider the intern's needs in addition to your own. The following advice from Internships.com can help you construct an experience that will attract and retain the best candidates for your opportunities.

Fitting fundamentals. Whether the basics of a program meet the student's specific needs is the first criterion they consider: Is the nature of the work a match for their major and career objectives? What is the timeframe, duration, and location of the program? How is the program structured in terms of hours and days per week?

Yes, many of these criteria are outside a company's control. However, understanding what's important to interns means you can create a posting that clearly addresses these aspects. And in it, you can put a positive spin on any less-desirable details.

Compensation. Sure, it's not all about the money; and, it's true, you can't put a price on valuable experience. But the unfortunate reality is that not all students can *afford* to work for free, no matter how much they might be motivated and interested in your industry. So before you decide you can't compensate interns at all, consider whether your budget might accommodate a more modest wage.

Appealing perks. Even if you can pay interns a standard wage—and *especially* if they'll be working without compensation—give some thought to how you might entice the cream of the student crop with some (seemingly trivial) incentives.

More than you might imagine, extras like free breakfasts, lunches, or designer coffee drinks—or even a half-day off every other Friday—can tip the scales in your favor when interns are picking between programs. And *should* they choose your organization, benefits like these can boost morale by communicating to interns their value to the company.

Meaningful work. Possibly more than anything else, interns are constantly clamoring for more “meaningful” work. Remember, their primary objective is to *learn*...both about the business in

general as well as to acquire the specific skills necessary to function effectively in the industry. When you “use” students simply to perform grunt work, you are robbing them of the opportunity to develop their knowledge and abilities. In short, a program without *meaningful* work is rendered *meaningless* to the intern.

Inclusion. In line with the learning objective is to what extent the organization includes the intern in employee activities. Aside from assigning challenging projects with educational value, inviting interns to meetings and other activities—as participants *or* observers—is an enticing attribute.

Including the intern whenever appropriate serves a dual purpose: It exposes them to more situations in which they can observe supervisor behavior and interactions. Moreover, it makes them feel part of the team. In the end, an intern who was treated like an “insider” is much more likely to accept a job offer or to speak favorably about a company to their peers.

Supervisor accessibility. There’s nothing more frustrating to interns than feeling forgotten: being left hanging around with no one to tell them what to do or to clarify the questions necessary to complete a project. In the best internship programs, there is always someone available.

Essentially, when the direct supervisor is out or occupied, there should be someone else assigned to the intern; and the intern should be made aware of this person and how to get a hold of them. Therefore, if at any point the intern has questions, they know there’s someone who can, if not answer their question, at least assign an interim task or let them know when their supervisor will return.

Detailed direction. Popular internship programs see to it that supervisors give easily understandable direction. Because not only does this reduce feelings of frustration, it gives the intern the information they need to succeed. Remember, an intern who feels proud of their accomplishments will more likely feel pleased with the program itself.

Effective evaluation. Students want to succeed. But the only way they’ll *know* if they’re falling short or exceeding expectations is through feedback. In a highly rated internship program, evaluations are structured, scheduled regularly, and include both praise and critique. Most importantly, criticism is coupled with clear direction on how to make improvements.

Appealing environment. Just like permanent employees, interns want somewhere comfortable to come to work...on both a physical and personal level. On the physical front, interns should have a workspace where they don’t feel like they’re intruding on another’s territory. And they certainly need their own chair and desk (or at least a dedicated tabletop). Also, employers must make sure interns have easy access to any necessary equipment: computer, printer, phone, fax, etc.

On the personal front, friendliness and helpfulness go a long way in affecting an intern's opinion of an organization. Above all else, interns should be treated with the same respect as any employee—bonus if the environment is free from cattiness, unnecessary drama, and oversized egos.

Candidness & congruency. Beginning with the posting of the position, it's important that employers are honest about what the student can expect from the internship. Misrepresenting the ratio of meaningful work to mindless work, the number of expected hours, or the skill set and/or subject matter involved can cause your program to develop a negative reputation. Moreover, pretending a program is something it's not, in order to attract candidates, takes away an intern's ability to choose the position best suited to their academic and career objectives.

10 internship characteristics that attract exceptional interns. Retrieved from <https://www.internships.com/employer/resources/setup/10-internship-characteristics-that-attract-exceptional-interns>

What are other resources for building strong internship programs?

For best practices related to hiring interns or building an internship program, please explore the following resources:

- <http://www.naceweb.org/talent-acquisition/internships/15-best-practices-for-internship-programs/>
- <https://www.internships.com/employer/resources/setup/12steps>
- <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/300092>
- <https://www.sba.gov/blogs/how-set-internship-program-your-small-business>
- <http://www.naceweb.org/talent-acquisition/internships/key-items-to-document-for-your-internship-program/>
- <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-run-an-awesome-internship-program-2010-4#-so-assign-them-real-hands-on-projects-5>