

Internships

Who are internships for?

Have you ever asked yourself how you will be able to pick the right type of work and the best employer in one short job interview? Equally you may wonder how someone interviewing applicants for a job can be confident of reaching the right conclusion in so limited a time. If so, you may find it useful to consider the idea of an internship.

An internship is like a longer interview, giving both sides an extended opportunity to make the right choice. As such it will have benefits for both employer and potential employees.

What are Internships?

Originally the Intern concept was designed to give able young professionals an opportunity to get an insight into some of the bigger international organisations which might otherwise seem to be a closed door, such as the various branches of the United Nations, the European Parliament, the Civil Service and Government Offices, also large international financial institutions and law firms. With many more graduates now entering the job market the practice has been extended to meet a growing need.

An internship may have a whole range of possible characteristics:

- it will always be a temporary position – lasting anything from a few days, weeks or months, but usually no longer than a year
- it may take place at any time but most often it would be during the long summer vacation at the end of the second year of the course or after graduation
- it can range from having a well defined, clearly structured, role to a more generalised period of work experience
- it may be unpaid, modest living expenses could be paid, or it could be salaried

Why apply for an Internship?

Advantages to the intern include the opportunity to:

- gain experience of a given job or employment sector
- appreciate what it might be like to work in that company
- check out different roles through work shadowing and visiting different departments within the company
- start a network of relevant contacts
- make a positive impression, in which case the employer may offer them a permanent post
- show commitment and ambition to other potential employers

In addition to gaining inside knowledge, interns can also develop their 'soft skills' such as communication, interpersonal skills, and cross-cultural understanding. These will be valued by future employers looking for high levels of maturity and flexibility.

Where to find more information on Internships

Consult Gap Guru facilitates quality placements for both gap years and internships in career areas such as Medicine, Journalism, Hotel Management and Business.
www.gapguru.com or telephone: 0800 032 3355

In Britain, the Government (DBIS) has been keen to use these models in developing both:

the **Apprenticeship Programme**:

www.apprenticeships.org.uk and

the **Graduate Talent Pool**, which matches graduates with internship opportunities identified by employers within their businesses and institutions:

www.graduatetalentpool.direct.gov.uk

Two similar programmes are:

Teach First:

www.graduates.teachfirst.org.uk and

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships:

www.ktponline.org.uk

New styles of internship appearing on the scene

Some are more like the gap year concept, with an opportunity to pick up a foreign language, or have a go at something new.....even if that is bungee jumping!

See our Information sheet 'Becoming a Volunteer' which includes information on voluntary work and on taking a Gap Year.

Some organisations abroad have started to use the term 'intern' simply to denote a combination of work and study. Be wary of adverts like 'hotel training plus study' - this may turn out to be waitressing with English classes.

But there are also useful websites which do clearly offer all three: holiday jobs, gap year jobs and graduate jobs/internships. See www.e4s.co.uk

Find out all you can, ask lots of questions, and welcome any chance to kick-start your career!

Finally, a word of caution! Some countries, notably the USA, have strict immigration laws. It may therefore be difficult to get an internship within the US.