

Internship Orientation: Making the Most of Your Internship



*Piper Center for Vocational & Career
with International & Off-campus Studies*

What is an internship?

“Structured opportunity to learn, grow, and contribute in a professional setting”

Potential Outcomes

- Self-discovery
- Skill development
- Career exploration
- Professional preparation
- Mentors/relationships

Potential Challenges/Issues

Doing the Work

- Different expectations
- Not prepared
- Work is not meaningful
- Time management
- Ethical dilemmas

Potential Challenges/Issues

Supervision/Guidance

- Personality differences or conflict
- Too little direction
- Too much direction (lack of autonomy)
- Lack of mentoring/guidance

Potential Challenges/Issues

Relationships with Colleagues

- Personality differences or conflict
- Building relationships
- Adapting to work culture
- Communication challenges
- Office politics

Internship Developmental Stages

1. Anticipation
2. Disillusionment
3. Confrontation
4. Competence
5. Culmination

From *The Successful Internship (2009)*, Sweitzer and King

The **behavior** and **skills** you demonstrate during your internship will determine how your employer will **remember** you.

Behaviors that **impress** employers

- Upbeat/positive attitude
- Willing to learn and take on the unknown
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Interpersonal communication skills (on the phone, in person, in writing)
- Initiative (don't need continuous supervision)
- Teamwork
- Work ethic and follow-through
- Time-management and organizational skills
- Ask good questions

Behaviors that **bug** employers

- Inability to articulate strengths
- Lack of maturity
- "What can you do for me" attitude
- Lack of courtesy
- Indecision, lack of goals
- Little sense of humor
- Inability to take criticism
- Late to work
- Doesn't ask questions
- Lack of enthusiasm and preparation

Making the Most of Your Internship

- Develop and share learning goals
- Understand expectations/priorities
- Be prepared/proactive
- Be positive and flexible
- Take initiative and use resources
- Build meaningful relationships

First Impressions

- Appropriate dress
- Punctuality
- Positive attitude
- Introducing yourself
- Remembering names
- Your first project/assignment

First Impressions

“Walk in with confidence and a smile; everyone is nervous so make it your goal to learn everyone’s names and feel comfortable”

Professionalism

- Preparation
- Attitude
- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Representing the organization
- Personal technology

Professionalism

“Always be early and enthusiastic, even about the projects that are not as fun or interesting. Work as hard as you can because it will not go unnoticed.”

Communicating with supervisor, co-workers

- Discuss expectations/goals
- Listen to what (s)he cares about
- Avoid excessive “college jargon”
- Prepare for meetings and discussions
- Suggest solutions when you present a problem (but still be humble)
- Take responsibility for mistakes

Communicating with supervisor, co-workers

“Be flexible and willing to adapt. Your expectations are likely different from your supervisors’. Be proactive. If you are unsatisfied, talk your supervisor about it.”

hey,

I can’t make it to the appointment today. Let me know when you have other times open.

Dear Sally,

I am unable to attend today's appointment due to a conflict with another meeting. Please let me know if we may reschedule. I am available tomorrow between 9 and 11 am, or Friday after 1 pm. Thank you.

Best,
Tim Person
person@gmail.com
(222) 555-0000

Conflict Resolution

- Own your mistakes - create action plan to address them
- Don't take it personally
- Prioritize the relationship
- Email is permanent
- Identify solutions that are mutually beneficial

Time Management

- Arrive on time, prioritize work, remain consistent
- Take breaks as appropriate
- Get sleep, plan social engagements accordingly (work schedule is different from student schedule)
- Integrate appropriate relationship building

Take Initiative

- Try new tasks
- Take on new challenges
- Seek opportunities to attend meetings, conferences, and trainings
- If you have downtime, offer to help others

Take Initiative

"Be willing to go above and beyond what your supervisor asks of you, or to brainstorm with your supervisor new tasks and projects you are interested in doing"

The Art of Connection

- Form *real* relationships
- Share your interests/passions
- Connect even when you don't need something. Be helpful.
- Ask good questions (and listen well)
- Follow through on advice, referrals
- Say thank you (and send thank you's)
- Use LinkedIn to manage connections

Dear Mr. Hubbard,

I enjoyed our conversation yesterday about your role as editor of the Super Duper magazine.

The writer's conference you mentioned sounds like just the experience I need. I look forward to attending and will let you know how it goes.

Thank you very much for your time and advice! It was a pleasure getting to know you.

Sincerely,
Harriet Writer
hwriter@gmail.com
(777) 888-9999

The Art of Connection

"Learn from the mistakes of your co-workers have made by asking them about their work history."

"Spend time building relationships with the people you work with because they will last long after your internship is over."

Make Time for Reflection

- Take stock of your goals going into the internship-- track progress!
- Talk to others about your experience
- Consider implications for your career goals and interests (roles, industry, work environment, etc.)
- Record stories for for future applications, essays, interviews

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Make Time for Reflection

"Be aware of yourself as you fill new roles; figure out what you like, what you don't like, what you're good at, and trust those experiences even if they surprise you."

Becoming Oriented

- *Organization*
- *Community* - history, assets, challenges
- *Colleagues* - learn about who you will be working with (LinkedIn)
- *Operations* - communication, breaks, etc.
- *Your Role* - who to meet with, projects & timelines, accessing info, etc.

Your First Day

- Wardrobe
- How to get there?/Where do I park?
- Navigating ambiguity, taking initiative (What if my supervisor isn't there?)
- How will I introduce myself?

Resources

- Site supervisor (and other colleagues)
- Faculty supervisor? (and other faculty)
- Peers/other interns
- Mentors
- Piper Center

"Make the most of your internship. Seek out every opportunity you can while you are there. Allow others to teach you new skills or explain different ideas. Keep a journal to jot down your changing thoughts and ideas."

Academic Internship- Faculty Supervisors

- Expectation: regular communication, source of support, feedback on academic activities
- Be proactive in asking for their feedback/input

Academic Internship- Site Supervisors

- Expectation: provide direction and mentorship, orientation, regular meetings, etc.
- Be proactive in requesting feedback or support in accomplishing learning goals

Academic Internship- Learning Plan

- Framework for identifying and sharing goals
- Link experience with academic study
- Tool for students to engage supervisors

Academic Internship- Evaluation Process

Mid-point and Final Evaluations

1. Complete self-evaluation
(supervisor completes similar form)
2. Discuss with site supervisor
3. Discuss with faculty supervisor
(if possible)