

A guide for Industry

What is an Internship?

An internship is a period of paid or unpaid work experience. It can be compulsory or optional as part of a study programme, or simply a chance to gain relevant skills and experience in a particular field. Internships are also known as work placement programmes or practicums, and primarily for the benefit of the Intern.

Why offer an Internship?

- Internships are a way to introduce our industry to the next generation.
- Participating in an internship allows an intern to learn about the vast array of jobs available, help individuals feel confident about the choices they make and the path they are pursuing.
- Facilitating an internship is one of the ways that you can 'give back' to the industry. It is a way to share the knowledge that you have gained with others.
- The best internships occur as a result of a positive experience for both the intern and the company. Both parties recognise that the intern is there to learn but they also have the potential to contribute to the workflow.

How to structure an Internship

- Consider the Internship as an overview experience that will give the intern information about how your company works, and exposure to the various roles/tasks that occur within your business.
- Think about the duration, and what would work best for your business:
 - Is it a block of 80 hours over 2 weeks? 1 day a week over a semester? A month or more outside of study time e.g. January / February.
- Consider if the internship is to be paid or unpaid? Both options are acceptable and there are several factors that influence why some companies offer paid internships and others offer unpaid internships.

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Recruiting an intern

- How will you find someone?
 - Will you take someone who just turns up at your door?
 - Will you advertise with the possibility of receiving multiple applicants?
 - Will you make it known to education providers you are offering an internship?
 - Do you select interns via a cover letter, CV and portfolio, or meet and greet the intern prior to them starting to ensure there is a good fit, or are you happy to take someone without going through a recruitment process?
- It is advisable that you meet a person before you offer them an internship to ensure that there is a good fit between your company and intern.

The Internship itself

An agreement

Draw up a basic agreement outlining agreed expectations and share with the intern. This is likely to include things such as:

- Outline of activities
 - Do you envisage the intern spending time with each person in your team to learn about their roles? Or do you envisage them to be completing tasks in only one or two areas?
- Objectives and outcomes
 - Think about what the key outcomes/objectives are for you & the intern? EG. By the end of week two should they be completing tasks by themselves etc.?
- Your expectations
 - Hours and place of work
 - Do you ask them to sign an NDA (non-disclosure agreement)?
- Key Contact
 - Identify a contact person within your organisation who will mentor, organise activities and manage the interns while at your workplace.

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Prep your team

- Ask your team to consider what they could show or discuss with the intern about aspects of their role.
- Ask them to prepare some thoughts about their role; their study pathway or career journey; what they studied; what a typical workday looks like; who they work with within the company; what they love about the role and what the challenges are?
- Ensure team members that will spend time with the intern know this is happening in advance, and what is expected of them.
- If the intern will be assisting staff with tasks make sure that work is available for the intern to participate in/complete etc.

Mix it up!

- Remember that people learn in different ways; observation, asking casual or formal questions, active participation, and involvement.
- Have a mixture of activities that range from shadowing a team member, to participating in meetings, involvement at a photoshoot, visiting suppliers, contractors etc.

Provide a learning experience

- While you show interns how processes and activities are covered in your company, it's also important to explain why you do things in a certain way - the why questions are the most important and get to the heart of the matter.
- Are all your activities conducted in-house or do you outsource / collaborate with others?
- This may help to highlight some of the networking and the professional engagement skills required.
- The overview of activities may be complex, so encourage students to take notes and ask questions for clarification.
- Allow extra time for students to complete a task, they don't want to make mistakes so things will take time.

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Concluding an Internship

- Try to provide appropriate encouraging feedback.
- Ensure the intern has time to ask questions and seek further insight before they leave.
- Do you spend time with the intern at the end of their time with you? What can you learn from their experience? What could you improve on next time? Were there any gaps? What could you do differently? If requested, please provide honest feedback to the institution.

A further note on Paid and Unpaid Internships

Regardless of if an internship is paid or unpaid it is intended to be a valuable opportunity for someone interested in the industry to gain real life experience.

Not every company is able to offer a paid internship and there could be a number of reasons for this. When a business provides an internship, they are committing to giving time and resource to help an intern understand the industry and are offering the opportunity to learn and gain real life experience. This provides an invaluable opportunity with benefits extending beyond any remuneration.

Internships are not defined in the Employment Relations Act. For an intern to be unpaid they need to be volunteers. A volunteer is not an employee, so employment law does not apply to them (with the exception of Health and Safety law). A volunteer gets the primary benefit from the internship, not the organisation they are working for.

An employer offering a paid internship can use a fixed-term agreement. In this case, the employment law applies – the employer needs a genuine reason for the fixed term appointment and the pay must be at least at the level of the minimum wage.

Read more at [Employment.govt.nz](https://www.employment.govt.nz)

Find out more

Read our '*Thinking of seeking an Internship? A guide for Interns*' and dive into case studies from business owners and students who have participated in internships at www.mindfulfashion.co.nz/Internships