

Internship

Commitment

Role	Commitment
Student	Long-term, regularly scheduled commitment
Educator	Regular support and progress monitoring
Employer	Long-term, regularly scheduled commitment

Arrangement Information

What

Internships are highly structured, time-limited career-entry experiences that place students in a workplace to participate in and contribute to authentic work activities under the guidance of an employer. Internships are often viewed as culminating work-based learning (WBL) experiences because they bring together the skills and knowledge students have developed through prior career awareness, exploration, and preparation activities. Internships connect those experiences to classroom learning and provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills in an authentic workplace setting.

Internships differ from ordinary summer or part-time jobs in important respects. When coordinated through a school or district, internships are guided by a learning plan that outlines the technical skills and career-ready practices students are expected to develop. These experiences are intentionally connected to classroom learning and career goals. In addition to workplace supervision, interns receive support from a school-based supervisor, such as an educator or counselor. School supervisors help students prepare for the experience, monitor progress through regular check-ins and site visits, communicate with workplace supervisors, document learning and skill development, and provide opportunities for students to reflect on and apply what they are learning throughout the internship.

When

Internships are most appropriate for high school and postsecondary education students. Students are best prepared to serve as interns after they have engaged in other WBL experiences, such as hearing from guest speakers in career presentations or participating in workplace tours, career fairs, and job shadowing experiences.

Time Commitment

Internships vary in length and structure. Decisions about the number of hours required, whether students are paid, and whether academic credit is awarded are determined through partnership with the employer. While internships are often offered during the summer, they can also take place during the school year as part of a course, after-school program, or weekend experience.

Regardless of when they occur, internships should include appropriate school-based supervision and support. For summer internships in particular, schools should plan for an educator, counselor, or other staff member to monitor student progress, communicate with employers, and support student learning throughout the experience.

Benefits

For **students**, internships serve to build professional networks, develop and refine technical skills and career-ready practices, and provide insight into a particular field or employer. Students often use internships to explore whether a particular industry, occupation, or workplace aligns with their interests and career goals while they develop valuable skills. These experiences provide an opportunity to “test drive” a potential career path, helping students make more informed decisions about their future education, training, and employment plans. Some internships are paid, allowing students to earn while learning, and others may offer the opportunity to earn credit as a part of the experience.

For **educators**, internships bridge classroom instruction with real-world experiences to further synthesize students’ learning and competence in the field. The direct connection with employers also bolsters the refinement of teaching curricula based on practical work experience.

For **employers**, internships provide an opportunity to engage and develop the next generation of talent, gain support on meaningful projects and work activities, and create leadership and mentorship opportunities for employees who supervise interns.