

Internships for 9-14 Schools: Host's Step by Step Guide

How to Use This Document:

Employers considering hosting student interns will want to learn basic program information and the steps required of them in order to provide internships. The following step by step guide begins by outlining the key features of the program. The guide ends with a set of recommendations for how employers develop successful internship experiences. Brackets indicate the opportunity to customize the document to the school's specific industry and related career pathways. This version shows a step by step guide for the engineering field.

BACKGROUND

Students in early college and career high schools which encompass grades 9-14 complete an advanced curriculum that combines rigorous college preparation with college courses and work-based learning opportunities that prepare students for success in college and/or entry into high potential careers. Partnered with a CUNY community college and one or more major employers, these schools offers students the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and an associate degree at no cost to their families during the six-year program. Students will complete internships beginning the summer after completing 11th grade.

INTERNSHIP OVERVIEW

Program structure

Internships last 6-8 weeks in summer

- Mid-June to mid-August

Interns spend most of their Monday-Friday weekly schedule working with one day of academics

- Work: Four days, 9am- 5pm, up to 32 hours/week
- School: One day, unpaid, off-site academic seminar

Interns are considered employees of their host sites and added to company payroll

- \$10-13 per hour
- Sites unable to pay full cost of intern wages may talk with school to find a solution

Intern candidates

Students eligible for internships will:

- Be at least 16 years of age
- Have completed at least three years at [school name] and X years of work-based learning
- Have earned [X] college credits and a [Y] minimum GPA
- Taken [X, Y, Z] technical classes

SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYERS

Before the internship, school staff will assist employers to identify appropriate internship projects and develop position descriptions. Staff will also guide supervisors through the recruitment and hiring process, including identifying which students would be the best organizational fit. Supervisors will receive an orientation that includes best practices for working with youth.

During the internship, staff will support supervisors in troubleshooting any issues that arise. After the internship, staff will engage supervisors to evaluate performance and discuss possibilities for continuation and improvement.

STEPS FOR DEVELOPING AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

1. Select a work environment

Our students have a wide range of interests and skill sets. We are seeking a variety of internship opportunities that will be a good fit for students and facilitate broad exposure to the [engineering] field. While some students will be most interested in and equipped for the work of a [technician], others will do better in an [office] setting. All types of work environments have the potential to make a great internship placement. The more important ingredients are an effective supervisor and one or more well-conceived projects.

Examples of work environments that would potentially be good for students are: [business or legal departments, labs, substations, and design offices]. Students will be able to make connections between these placements and [electrical or mechanical engineering] concepts they learn in school.

2. Identify an intern supervisor

As this will be the first professional work experience for many students, and the first in [energy technology] for all students, it's important to identify supervisors who have the capacity and knowledge to support young people in the workplace. The supervisor may play more of a mentoring role than they are used to when supervising experienced, adult professionals. The supervisor plays a critical role in orienting and helping interns acclimate to the workplace, and providing oversight both to ensure a high-quality work product and maximize student learning.

While every industry, company, and workplace is unique, we suggest a few “best practices” to optimize the experience for employer and student intern. We suggest recruiting supervisors that:

Managerial style

- Demonstrate an interest in mentoring a young student,
- Enjoy and take advantage of teaching and coaching opportunities with their employees
- Can clearly break down large projects into manageable tasks, communicate performance feedback clearly and frequently, and adjust expectations as needed

Internship Tools: Host's Step by Step Guide

- Are patient with their employees when assuming new tasks
- Hold high expectations for their employees in order to motivate them, while offering the support necessary for them to excel (this is similar to the way teachers at the school approach students when teaching advanced college prep and early college courses)

Logistical details

- Willing to introduce and connect interns to other teams, departments, and activities at the worksite
- Share primary work location with interns rather than providing remote supervision

3. Design a project(s)

Given the short-term nature of the summer internships, we find that interns contribute the most and get the most out of the experience when their responsibilities are specific, discrete, time-bound, and integrated with a wider team of employees where possible. In addition to their assigned project(s) detailed in the position description, interns will gain a lot from exposure and learning activities across the work environment.

We suggest that intern projects ideally meet some if not all of the following guidelines:

- Answer an existing need within the company, perhaps something the team has wanted to explore or implement but has lacked staff capacity to execute
- Can be completed in 4-6 weeks of intensive work, assuming the first and last weeks are dedicated to orientation and closing activities including the final presentation
- Can be broken down into weekly and daily goals with regular opportunities to assess progress
- Require a balance of independent and group work
- Ask for an end product and intermediate deliverables, provide the opportunity to consult with other employees and present results or findings at end

Interns will also benefit from working with peers and learning while on the job. Two additional suggestions for structuring an internship placement are to:

- Hire interns in pairs or small teams where possible so that interns can share the experience with another student(s) and collaborate on projects
- Include interns in regular team and department experiences such as attending meetings and trainings with other employees

4. Screen intern candidates and finalize logistics

In order to ensure the best possible fit for your organization and project, school staff will assist you in the process of screening and selecting students for each internship opportunity. Steps will include:

- Create a written description for each position including requirements and preferred attributes for the intern
- Review select resumes sent to you by school staff and identify candidates for interview
- Screen intern candidates including in-person interview preferably at your worksite and rank in order of preference
- School staff will match interns to positions as closely as possible according to employer preference and student skillset
- Determine wage available to interns and allocate funding in budget; discuss with school if funding is an issue
- Provide interns with pre-hire documents to complete

5. Onboard new interns

Once students arrive at your workplace, it's important to provide them with a warm welcome and thorough introduction to the people and knowledge they'll need to thrive in the new environment. While this may look different at every workplace, we recommend the following:

- Take the interns on a group tour of relevant workspaces pointing out key sites such as the printer/copier, kitchen, front desk, conference rooms, and restrooms. As you walk by cubicles and offices, invite interns to introduce themselves to existing staff and vice versa
- Arrange for interns to receive any photo identification and access cards the interns will need to work at their assigned facilities
- Arrange for interns to be processed through HR, where applicable, i.e. complete payroll forms, tax forms, etc.
- Provide interns with basic office supplies or the equivalent. This may include access to a computer loaded with required software, phone, writing materials, and other tools
- Arrange a meeting between supervisor and interns, either as a group or individually. Provide an overview of the main projects assigned, set clear expectations for the first one or two tasks required and the regular work schedule, and establish an ongoing line of communication as to how interns can best approach their supervisor with questions (drop by in person, schedule meeting, phone call, email, instant message, etc.), and how regular check-ins will occur for the duration of the internship (in-person or by phone, approximate length and frequency)