

Internship Position Development Guide

A well-written internship description serves as the foundation for a successful partnership. By providing clear details, you attract the right candidates and ensure they are prepared for the role. This guide utilizes the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) standards to help you increase the quality of your applicant pool and foster a positive employer reputation.

NACE Definition: "An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional workplace setting. Internships provide students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience, develop social capital, explore career fields, and make connections in professional fields."

Part 1: Employer Preparation Checklist

Before you post your position, we recommend confirming you have the infrastructure in place to support a student. We suggest reviewing the following:

- **Mentorship Plan:** Do you have a dedicated staff member available to provide at least one hour per week of direct feedback?
- **Project Design:** Do you have a project that allows the student to apply classroom knowledge to real-world outcomes?
- **Accessibility:** Is this role as inclusive as possible? (e.g., flexibility in hours, clear skill-based requirements).
- **Budgeting:** Have you budgeted for this intern? *Note: PLU advocates for paid opportunities to support student equity.*

Part 2: Internship Position Description Template

Organization Name: [Insert Name]

Internship Title: [Insert Title]

Tip: Be specific. Titles like "Social Media Marketing Intern" attract more relevant candidates than generic titles like "Summer Intern."

Location(s) of Position: [Insert Location]

Tip: List specific office locations, not just the city. Many students rely on public transit and need to verify accessibility. If the role is hybrid or remote, mention this early to increase your applicant pool.

Position Timeframe:

- **Start Date:** [Date]
- **Duration:** [Minimum duration]
- **Hours:** [Expected weekly hours/schedule]

Tip: Even if you are open to extending the role, listing a minimum duration helps students plan and allows you to end the employment cleanly if the match isn't a good fit.

Organization Description: [Insert your mission statement, values, and a brief description of your culture.]

Tip: Help students understand your environment. What is important to your organization's work? If you are a large company, focus on the specific department or team the student will join.

Position Description: [Describe the core responsibilities and include examples of specific projects and tasks.]

- **Learning Focus:** Internships must prioritize experiential learning over standard operations. Administrative or "busy work" should be limited (capped at roughly 20% of the intern's time).
- **Mentorship & Integration:** Explain how the intern will be supported. Describe your plan for regular check-ins (e.g., a 1-hour weekly feedback meeting), team meeting attendance, or informational interviews with staff.
- **Student Agency:** If possible, include an opportunity for the intern to pitch a self-guided project. This fosters learning, gives the student agency, and creates tangible value for your team.

Learning Outcomes: [List the skills or competencies the intern will gain.]

- *Tip: Learning outcomes are distinct from duties. They help students understand how this role fits into their professional development. When*

possible, map outcomes to specific projects (e.g., "Gain proficiency in [Software] through [Specific Project]").

Compensation: [Hourly rate/Stipend/Unpaid/Assistance for academic credit]

- *Note: PLU strongly promotes paid internships for all students. For more information regarding the ethics of unpaid internships, click [here](#). For legal considerations, click [here](#).*
- *Note: If offering an unpaid internship, we recommend flexibility regarding class year and previous experience to ensure accessibility.*

Qualifications: [List desired skills or requirements.]

- *Tip: Be thoughtful here. Listing niche credentials or years of experience can inadvertently filter out talented students. Focus on skill-based requirements. If you are open to candidates from various backgrounds, add: "We encourage students to apply even if they do not meet every listed qualification."*

Application Process:

- **Materials Requested:** [e.g., resume, cover letter, writing sample]
- **Deadline:** [Date]
 - *It can be helpful to denote if applications will also be reviewed as they arrive, and if there is a possibility of the position closing before this date.*
- **How to Apply:** [link, where to send materials to, apply via Handshake]
- **Interview Process:** [e.g., number of rounds, format]
- **Hiring Timeline:** [When each phase will begin]
 - *This is especially relevant for internships, as students are often applying to multiple roles and may be limited to one acceptance. Even if you cannot communicate with each candidate, providing a clear window—e.g., "All candidates selected for an interview will be notified within two weeks of the closing date"—helps students plan and reduces follow-up inquiries.*

Work Authorization Required: [e.g., US citizen/permanent residents only, international students]

- Are you willing to hire candidates who are temporarily authorized to work for a defined period in their field of study? (e.g., for a job/internship under [OPT/CPT](#))

- Would you sponsor a long-term work visa for the right candidate?

Point of Contact: [name, company contact info, indication if you are open to direct student contact/follow-up]

Part 3: Intern Onboarding

Onboarding is your first opportunity to establish professional standards and set your intern up for success. To ensure a smooth transition, we recommend the following approach:

- **Define Professional Standards:** Many students are new to professional environments and may not be familiar with unspoken workplace norms. On the first day, explicitly review your expectations regarding timeliness, dress code, and communication etiquette. Framing this as a learning experience helps students understand the "why" behind these standards.
- **Prepare Your Team:** Ensure all staff members who will interact with the intern are ready to serve as mentors. Encourage them to share their own career journeys, look for opportunities to collaborate on tasks, and help the intern connect their daily work back to their specific internship goals.
- **Establish Clear Support Channels:** Clearly communicate who the intern should approach for questions or feedback. Establishing a clear process for how to handle issues and reassuring them that it is okay to ask for help prevents small misunderstandings from becoming larger roadblocks.

If you have any questions, please contact career@plu.edu. To learn more about recruiting at PLU, visit our [website](#).

