

Internships provide you with an opportunity to explore interests, occupations and work environments; apply classroom knowledge; learn new skills; make contacts; expand your resume and much more! They're an important part of your college experience, and the Career Center is here to help you evaluate opportunities and think about what will be best for your needs, interests and future.

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

Is it truly an internship, or is it actually a part-time job? And what's the difference?

Generally, internships have the following characteristics – which usually make them distinct from part-time jobs:

- Provides meaningful, career-related work that extends the student's learning beyond the classroom.
- Is carefully monitored by a site supervisor to ensure there is ongoing communication and learning takes place between the two parties.
- Involves "intentional learning" with specific goals and objectives that support the student's academic and career interests.
- Allows for sufficient time for the student to actively reflect on his/her experiences.

For example, although a clerical job (like a Receptionist or Administrative Assistant) or a job as a sales clerk may provide you with valuable experience, and money to support your school-related expenses, it does not provide experience that extends your learning beyond the classroom or involve 'intentional learning' to support academic and career interests. As such, it would be an appropriate part-time job but NOT an appropriate internship.

“Is this too good to be true?” Or “Something doesn't seem quite right” Scam internship postings

We encourage you to carefully review internship opportunities – regardless of the portal/resource through which you find them – before submitting your application materials, particularly those including any sensitive material. **As the saying goes – if something seems too good to be true, it usually is.**

Use our 'Identifying Scam or Fraudulent postings' handout to help scan internship listings for any red flags that may signal it's not a legitimate opportunity. **If you identify any illegitimate internships which are being advertised within the University of Washington community**, please notify Career Center Assistant Director Emma O'Neill-Myers: econeill@uw.edu.

CONSIDERATIONS AROUND COMPENSATION

Look at whether the internship is paid or unpaid

While unpaid internships can still provide valuable learning opportunities and provide you with experience and connections that are significantly beneficial, we do encourage you to carefully calculate the level of commitment required. **Unpaid internships are commonplace in the government and non-profit sectors; unpaid internships in the for-profit/corporate sectors should be evaluated more carefully.** Ideally, unpaid internships should require no more than 12-15 hours a week of your time, and it should be immediately clear to you what you gain (in terms of experience, tangible skills, exposure and networking connections) from the experience. If you cannot determine the value of the experience, you may wish to keep seeking other opportunities.

If your department requires the completion of an internship as part of its graduation requirements, check in with your academic adviser to ensure that there are not stipulations around payment for internship. Credit does NOT substitute for pay, legally, although some employers view them interchangeably as a form of ‘compensation’. Read on for things to consider as you determine whether you wish to pursue academic credit for an internship.

So what’s the big deal about unpaid internships, anyway?

Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Department of Labor set forth six criteria that a corporate employer must meet in order for an unpaid internship to be considered legal. The criteria are listed publically at <http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.htm>.

Some people argue that there are few, if any, internships that actually meet that criteria; meaning that the majority of corporate unpaid internships are in violation of the Department of Labor’s criteria. It is important to note that these criteria only apply to corporate employers; non-profit and government employers are NOT subject to this criteria, and unpaid internships in those sectors are both commonplace and legal.

At the Career Center, we believe that it is an employer’s responsibility to verify and enforce legality of their unpaid internships, and that it is not our place to determine on behalf of our students which types of opportunities they are able to view and pursue. As such, we post both paid and unpaid corporate internships, as well as internships from the non-profit and government sectors, in the HuskyJobs database. We encourage you to evaluate and choose for yourself whether to pursue them.

CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT ACADEMIC CREDIT

Do I have to earn credit?

The University of Washington does not grant academic credit for an internship experience alone; credit is granted for the demonstrated learning that is derived from that internship experience. Just as students do not earn academic credit for simply attending class, but instead earn academic credit for demonstrating what they learned from the course lectures/discussions, readings and assignments.

Within that context, some academic departments and/or employers may require that you be registered for a credit bearing course that is associated with the internship experience. **If you are pursuing an internship as a graduation requirement, be sure to check with your academic adviser as to whether that internship must have academic credit attached to it in order to be counted.**

You should also ask yourself whether you want to earn credit. In some scenarios, earning credit may not be in your best interest, and you could ask the employer if it is truly a requirement or something you could opt not to pursue. Some questions to ask/consider for yourself are:

- Do I need credits? Will they apply towards a graduation requirement or advance my pursuit of a degree?
- Do I have the option of registering for a credit-bearing course within my department that is associated with my internship, or should I pursue General Studies 350 as a mechanism for earning credit for my demonstrated internship learning?
- How much will the credits cost me, if I register for them? If they aren’t meeting a need academically or related to my degree, are they worth the expense?

Check some great answers to Frequently Asked Questions about credit-based internships at the Carlson Center’s page: <http://www.washington.edu/carlson/gen-st-350-frequently-asked-questions/>.

Can I be paid AND receive credit?

Technically, yes – you can be paid by the employer and also register for academic credits at the University of Washington. **However, the employer does not have to offer this option, and some departments may be unwilling to allow you to register for credits associated with an internship experience if you're also being paid.** Confirm with your departmental adviser.

WHAT NEXT?

I'd really love to work full-time at the company where I'm interning. How can I stand out during my internship and increase my chances of being hired?

Although converting interns to full-time employees can be a valuable, time and cost-effective method of hiring, not all companies are equipped to convert interns to full-time, or have that as a goal of their internship program. **It is important not to assume that a full-time job will be available for you at the end of an internship.**

However, there are definitely ways that you can stand-out during an internship experience that will not only allow you to get the most out of the experience and secure a positive recommendation from a site supervisor, but will position you well if a full-time opportunity does become available at the completion of your internship. View these suggestions and resources in our 'Making a Good Impression' handout at <http://bit.ly/1kDZvo6>.

I am a UW student and I had an internship in which I was made to feel uncomfortable, or I was tasked with duties and responsibilities that didn't seem ethical or appropriate for an internship. Who should I report this to?

If you have an internship that you're concerned about the legitimacy of, please report it to Career Center Assistant Director Emma O'Neill-Myers at econeill@uw.edu. If you are registered for credits associated with your internship experience you may also consider your faculty sponsor, departmental advisor, and/or General Studies 350 staff member as a resource to assist you.